Art and Archives:

Theoretical and Practical Definitions of "Documentary Art" in Canadian Archives

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the nature of art held by archives, known collectively as "documentary art." While the category exists firmly across Canada, exactly what is meant by documentary art has not been comprehensively discussed. In this thesis, both theoretical and practical definitions and their application to the collections will be explored. This will be done by examining three broad dimensions: the very limited theoretical writing that tries to define art in archives; the much broader base of art theory over the past centuries as well as writings about art in general within the Canadian context; and the actual historical evolution, current practices, and personal ideas of archivists who work with art, and comparing these to the ideas and understanding about documentary art held by professionals in the art gallery world.

The first stage of this investigation works towards establishing the larger context of archival art, specifically examining the nature of art itself, as well as the development of art in Canada specifically. The larger contextual picture helps clarify the specific ideas of "documentary" art and its development in Canada. The next stages of these investigations included looking at catalogues, scholarly articles, websites, finding aids, and then interviewing senior curators and archivists in both art galleries and archives, so that a sense of the differences between art, or aesthetic or "gallery" art, on the one hand,

and "documentary" or archival art on the other, could be formed. The institutions used for this research and comparative analysis, and staff interviews were Library and Archives Canada, the National Gallery of Canada, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Centre du patrimoine at the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre and the Archives of Manitoba.

Based on these explorations, comparisons, and research the thesis concludes that there is a traditionally understood definition of documentary art as art that is realistic in style and accurately depicts people, places, activities and events. It is also generally considered to be of an inferior quality than art held in art gallery collections, it is art that was collected for what it depicts, not who created it or the quality of the work itself. This definition, however, is vaguely stated in much literature, with the assumption that most readers already understand the nature of art in archival collections as opposed to the more familiar art gallery collection. A definition is not useful if the audience is unaware of it.

This definition also arose at a time when much art was still realistic in style and depiction, in the early twentieth century. At this time, it was accepted that such realistic images portrayed the truth. Scholarship into history and art history has changed drastically over the past hundred years, and these ideas are no longer valid. What becomes evident in both interviews and literature is that definition is flawed, and has faced, and will continue to face challenges as ideas about art and information continue to change.

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I would also like to thank the board of the John S. Ewart Memorial Bursary for enabling me to travel to Ottawa to complete research for my thesis. This research could not have been done without the aid of many colleagues who consented to be interviewed about their ideas about the nature of Documentary Art: Jim Burant and Jennifer Devine at Library and Archives Canada; Cyndie Campbell, Charles Hill and Rosemary Tovell at the National Gallery of Canada; Mary Jo Hughes, Helen Delacretaz and Doug Lewis of the Winnipeg Art Gallery; Jacinthe Duval of the Centre du patrimoine of the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, and Elizabeth Blight of the Archives of Manitoba.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Gary Scott and to my parents Bruce and Linda Ross for encouraging me in so many ways, no matter what path I took, throughout my continuing academic career.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Canada has long practised what is known as the “total archives” concept of collecting, where unpublished documents in almost every media are collected. This means that in addition to the textual records and photographs that are frequently associated with archives, most archives in Canada have tried to further enhance and broaden their historical record by collecting many other media, such as film, maps, sound recordings, databases, and art. Such archival art holdings (paintings, drawings, prints, posters and so on) have been labeled “documentary art” to distinguish it from “aesthetic” or “fine” art as found in art galleries.

While these various media that comprise documentary art are present in many archival collections across the country, there has been little discussion around them in professional literature and many researchers are likely surprised to learn of their existence once they begin delving into finding aids. Articles that have been published in the archival literature have been few and far between and there appears to be a general lack of awareness about these collections outside the profession. There is a dedicated group of archivists who work with these collections and the artworks themselves from archives

are frequently exhibited both in archives and art galleries. However, there has been little material written defining "documentary art." What, exactly, makes art archival or "documentary"? How is it decided what art is "documentary"? How is it distinct from the more familiar gallery collections seen by many as "fine" art? Are these distinctions, and the assumptions and practices surrounding these art collections, valid? What makes some art documentary and other art aesthetic? This thesis will explore these distinctions.

To answer questions about the nature of documentary art, it is useful to start at the beginning – what exactly is art? Is it an idea or medium that is easily defined? How has the idea of the nature of art changed over time? What has the distinctive growth of art in Canada contributed to the collection of art by archives? It is in Canada primarily that art is collected by archives. Is there a reason for this? To address these questions, theoretical literature on the nature of art, as well as art historical writings on art in the Western world, are the place to begin discussion, followed with a brief overview of the development of art in Canada. This will constitute the first chapter of this thesis, setting the stage for a discussion of the specific area of documentary art.

Chapter Two will look at the literature surrounding the field of documentary art to date, and the history of our national collection, in addition to an overview of what is actually collected. Archival publications and exhibition catalogues as well as academic articles will be discussed. This analysis will help to focus the discussion of ideas about what documentary art is, but does not answer all the questions about the nature of this medium. Indeed, many articles focus on a narrow slice of documentary art, and do not necessarily approach the big picture or ask the larger theoretical questions. A definition

emerges from such sources, but it is hazy and subjective. To further explore this topic, first-hand research is necessary.

In the third chapter, the nature of archival collections themselves as well as the ideas of practising archivists and curators will be explored through case studies of institutions at both the local or regional level -- the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Archives of Manitoba -- and on the national stage -- the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian War Museum and Library and Archives Canada (LAC). It is useful to compare in this way notions of art collection between the two distinct types of institution, the archives and the art gallery, and explore whether the definition used by archivists is known and understood outside the profession. Gallery curators, whose careers revolve around researching and putting together art exhibitions, can indicate whether the ideas behind an archival collection of art are understood outside the profession. Through formal interviews with professionals in the archival and gallery world, it will become possible to explore whether the concepts of documentary art enunciated in the literature hold true to the mandates of archives, ideas of archivists expressed in interviews and in literature, and the nature of the collections themselves.

An overview of the collections at the archival institutions named above is also useful, exploring whether definition, both theoretical and practical, and practice are linked in collecting policy. Traditional ideas about art at this stage in time begin to compete with more contemporary theories. This aspect of the issue of documentary art becomes very relevant in a short case study about the Centre du patrimoine, archives located at the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre in Saint Boniface in Winnipeg, which is actively pursuing art created in many different ways from that traditionally seen in most

archives. The Centre strives to document the Franco-Manitoban culture using all media. Here the archival definitions of documentary art shift. The interpretation of culture used by the Centre du patrimoine is broad and goes beyond naturalistic depictions of people at work and play.

After a survey of the nature of art and art history in Canada is presented, and the literature around documentary art and current practices is discussed, the definition of "documentary art" will be clearer, as will its relevance to archival collections and the work of archivists in the field today. Another important consideration will be whether the ideas of archivists of what constitutes archival "documentary art" is shared by other art professionals. In discussing this most basic aspect of documentary art many questions emerge. They not only help to point out directions for future research, but indeed to help define the problems that currently exist.

Chapter 2

The Western Art Tradition and Canadian Art History

What is art? If one were to ask two artists it seems unlikely that they would give the same answer. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines art as "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects."[1] This definition describes the act of creation, but when it comes to describing the actual objects, it refers to them as "aesthetic objects," "works so produced," "fine arts," or even "graphic arts."[2] "Aesthetic object" and "fine art" are not particularly useful or precise as descriptive terms. This definition does not explain the nature of art beyond defining it as something made by people, which is a broad category of objects. Skill and imagination were used to create the first trampoline, car or computer, but they are not considered art in today's society. Aesthetic appeal is also a relatively new concept when it comes to art.[3] So does the term "aesthetic object" apply to an object created before the idea of

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[1] *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1996, p. 65.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Aesthetics as a philosophy emerged in the eighteenth century, and was concerned with principles of beauty and taste. As an art philosophy it was embraced by many in the nineteenth century, including

aesthetic appreciation of art evolved? Aesthetics or taste also change over time and can be unique to a particular place, so again, are these concepts useful in establishing exactly what art is? The terms “fine arts” and “graphic arts” also impose certain restrictions onto art that are not relevant in the current post-modern age, and indeed are Western concepts to begin with and not therefore relevant without excessive qualification to other cultures.

Art has served many functions over the ages, be they religious, political, social or personal. Art has also found its way into the holdings of archives as well as art galleries, thus creating both definitional and jurisdictional ambiguity between archives and art galleries. However, to define and understand documentary art, one must first understand the wider art trends and curatorial history in which this category developed.[4] Tracing even briefly some of the broad values and functions of Western art since the Middle Ages up to the present provides a way to approach art and art theory in general as it applies to Western development. To further explore this idea of documentary art as it has developed in Canada, Canadian art and its function in society will be briefly outlined.

Before looking at the trends of Western art in depth some limitations must be imposed, and the idea of art itself put into context. Delving into a subject such as this could fill volumes. There are personal, cultural, and time-based interpretations of art. There is the history of art, a relatively new discipline,[5] the historiography of art history,

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figures such as Oscar Wilde and James Abbott McNeill Whistler. As an art movement, the focus was on appreciating art for art’s sake. However, art historical study often starts with a study of cave paintings, Egyptian, and Sumerian art. These objects were first created thousands of years ago by people of vastly different cultures who did not share these ideas. The aesthetic philosophy in art has also been discredited in the later half of the twentieth century when it became impossible to ignore the fact that there was no universal standard of taste and beauty. Shearer West, *The Bulfinch Guide To Art History.* Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1996, pp. 200-201. (Entries on aestheticism, Aesthetic Movement and aesthetics.)

[4] In the post-modern sense, all art is documentary in some way, but only certain art has been considered documentary in an archival sense. The post-modern critique of art generally is outside the scope of this thesis, even if in a broad way it influences some aspects of archival documentary art.

[5] Art history as an academic discipline only emerged in the nineteenth century, and did not spread widely until the invention of the photograph allowed widespread dissemination of art images.

art appreciation and art criticism and art education, all related but different aspects of the study of and interaction between people and art. There is also the creation of art itself, the intentions and ideas of the creators and their sponsors, and the expectations of their audiences. Many societies whose art is studied in the Western tradition do not or did not think of the objects they create as art, at least not necessarily in the sense we understand today.[6] Even Western European-based culture has seen dramatic change in its ideas concerning art over the centuries. We often view these works as art works within the context we understand them today and assume such notions of what is art hold true for other times and in other places. It is important to look at the notions of art in society at the time of its creation to better understand the object in question. Despite all of this, one thing remains constant across time and space: what we see as the fine or visual arts are a powerful medium for individual and societal expression, one that can often transcend language, culture, political borders, and time.

It is also important to balance the idea of society with that of the individual. E. H. Gombrich, a respected art historian whose career has spanned most of the twentieth century, has argued that seeing art as a reflection of the age is too vague a notion.[7] There is also the individuality of the creator to be taken into account. There is then a delicate

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[6] For example, African, Asian, and Aboriginal arts have been included in the field of Art History over the past century. Many people have attempted to understand these arts based on the Western canon, ignoring the function of, and ideas about the object as it existed in its own society. When African art began to be looked at in the Western countries in the early twentieth century, it was labeled as "primitive" art. Inuit art also has an interesting history. There was no word in their language to describe art. Until Inuit people were able to sell sculptures to collectors on a large commercial scale, they had no tradition of producing them. When the Co-ops were first established as a means of bringing employment and cash into Northern communities, Inuit carvers were often instructed on what to carve, based on what the government believed would be marketable in the South. Today, what is still called Inuit art (instead of becoming integrated into the larger Canadian context) is a thriving "industry," which has produced many internationally celebrated artists, and varied and exciting works in many media. A good discussion of these ideas can be found in *Nuvisavik: The Place Where We Weave* (edited by Maria von Finckenstein, Canadian Museum of Civilization catalogue, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
[7] E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*. London: Phaidon, 1999, p. 271.

balance to keep in mind as one looks at many works of art – the balance between the individual's personal experiences, beliefs, ideas, and society, its norms, culture and politics. Art is influenced by the context of its creating society and may then influence other societies. Artists do not work in a vacuum. Biased interpretations of a work can result if one is to lean too heavily to one side.

Gombrich has also said that shifts in value systems underlie movements of taste,[8] highlighting another important aspect of art; it is primarily made for the enjoyment and consumption of its contemporary audience, a factor that few artists have been able to ignore if they wish to make a living from their art. By looking at current and historical art in terms of what was in favour, or "tasteful," in its contemporary period (as opposed to current tastes) reveals much about the values that people, past and present, place on certain types of art. As tastes change, the value placed on a work of art can change, sometimes to the point where it is no longer seen as "fine" art and develops new functions – including archival ones, *or vice versa*. Exploring these broad issues in the framework of art historical literature and theory in this chapter will set the stage for the archival theoretical response to documentary art in the next chapter. The following chapters will look at actual practice and ideas held by those practising in the archival and curatorial worlds.

Art in the Western Tradition: From Medieval Times to the Present

The idea of "fine" art did not exist in the Middle Ages. The word "art" in medieval context described almost all human activities: painting, astronomy, cooking

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[8] E. H. Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1979, p. 162.

and shoemaking were all seen as arts. The category of liberal "arts" taught in the first medieval universities is still familiar to many, including logic, grammar and rhetoric. These fields were understood in this period as the high arts; visual art creation was understood on a similar level as farming – a physical activity that produced a tangible product. Medieval artisans were seen as makers, not creators. Patrons usually chose the content and form of a desired object or piece. Art did not exist independently as an object of beauty; it had a specific role to fulfil, primarily a religious or didactic one, or even as a visible demonstration of power and wealth.

The medieval tradition is a varied one, influenced by classical art from Greece and Rome, early Christian art, Germanic and Celtic traditions, and strongly shaped by Christian belief. During and after the Renaissance with its radical changes in taste, medieval art was often unappreciated and only began to be favoured again in the nineteenth century.[9] Much medieval art is symbolic, meaning that events and stories are alluded to or referenced, but not illustrated directly. Naturalism was not necessarily a goal in such art's creation; it was the symbolism and the function that mattered. Modern study of medieval art has often interpreted it on its aesthetic quality and technical skill. Yet there was not a tradition of a single genius "creator" in the Middle Ages: artisans worked cooperatively.[10] Works were usually unsigned; they were not created for earthly glory and recognition but primarily for the greater glory of God, and His earthly

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[9] Taste at play! Vast periods of art creation have been scorned by a series of generations, only to be re-embraced later by their descendants.

[10] It is interesting to note that in the medieval tradition, many women worked within guilds as artisans, and some even ran their own shops. Gender division of labour did not firmly develop until the Renaissance.

mediator, the Roman Catholic Church. This followed the Rule of St. Benedict, imposed by Rome on its artisans in monasteries and nunneries.[11]

While a great deal of medieval art was religious in its function, there was still a tradition of secular art, although for numerous reasons not much of it survives.[12] An example of surviving secular art is the Bayeux Tapestry, a long narrative textile hanging illustrating the Battle of Hastings in 1066. A work such as this likely had multiple functions beyond the illustrative or aesthetic; one of the most obvious is that it served as a piece of propaganda and memory-making. It narrates events primarily from the viewpoint of William the Conqueror,[13] and many believe its function was to help established his right to the English throne.

The Renaissance has traditionally been seen by many commentators as the pinnacle of artistic skill and human imagination. It is often viewed as an age of advancement in the sciences and humanities following what some still refer to as the "Dark Ages." Here again, people tend to project modern art values back onto the period. Modern notions about art began to develop in this era, but there were still differences in the treatment and understanding of art and artists. In this era, a piece was still tied to its functional purpose. While many great artists did move beyond the guild system of artisans, just as many remained tied to it as craftsmen and almost all worked for sponsors who in turn shaped content and style. What is true is that a greater interest in naturalism and a renewed appreciation for the classical art of Greece and Rome emerged.

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[11] Dennis Earl Fehr, *Dogs Playing Cards: Powerbrokers of Prejudice in Education, Art and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993, p. 27.

[12] Much religious work has survived because it remained in churches, which were less likely to be sacked and looted. Churches did not often have to sell off belongings to finance wars and the like. Plus, much religious art was made of more precious and durable materials, such as gold, silver, wood and glass, as opposed to fabric and tempura paintings.

[13] Some scenes within the tapestry have long been cause for debate, as certain scenes illustrate instead the Anglo-Saxon version of events.

Instead of symbolic representations of ideas, as seen in medieval art, visual narratives emerged, images that told the story instead of alluding to it. This idea is known as *istoria*.[14] Religious images were still prominent but other themes began to emerge as well. Scenes from Greek mythology became popular, as were portraits of contemporary notables. Interest in the humanities and scholarship were linked to this tradition. The stories that were portrayed were still somewhat limited; artists tried to depict traditional images in new and original ways. In Northern Europe, landscape painting emerged as a genre, but figural paintings were seen as higher in the hierarchy of subjects.[15] Many works were still commissioned by the church, but private citizens began to collect and commission artworks for themselves or their organization and for donation to the church.

Instead of working exclusively within the guild structure, in Italy academies began to train artists. Academies enhanced the prestige of the artisan, for they were associated with universities and higher learning. Intellectual training became an important part of artistic education. Mathematical perspective was developed allowing for a greater naturalism in the placement of images in space and in drawing the proportions of the human body more realistically, new or recovered knowledge of classical mythology and religious symbolism was important. Yet art theory was not a subject;[16] training focused on how to do something, not why.

It was also during the Renaissance period that the first art historical writing was undertaken. Giorgio Vasari, an artist, is best known for his book, *Lives of the Most*

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[14] Vernon Hyde Minor, *Art History's History*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994, p. 58.
[15] The hierarchy of subjects began to develop in this period. Historical and narrative paintings were at the top, followed by portraits, landscapes, and then still lifes.
[16] Minor, *Art History's History*, 1994, p. 13.

Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors, first published in 1550. While this book is valuable for the information it presents on individual artists, it also exemplifies the ideas about art in this period. Vasari's *Lives* illustrates the canon of values in Renaissance art.[17] These values were codified in the practice of art history and even in much of the art subsequently produced until the Modern art movements of the late nineteenth century. Vasari's book presents art as a biological cycle of growth and decay.[18] He praises the ancients (Romans and Greeks) and dismisses the Middle Ages. He divided up his era into three periods, likened to a person's growth. The Age of Giotto is that of childhood, Masaccio's era is adolescence, and maturity is reached with Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.[19] Art was seen as progressing, and each step a movement towards a more life-like representation up the ladder to ideal beauty. Each of these periods is illustrated by Vasari with the biographies of famous artists. This idea of art progressing towards some ideal form of beauty was unquestioned until the nineteenth century.

Art played a major role in Renaissance culture; it embodied religious, philosophical, and social ideas and ideals. The didactic quality of art was emphasized. The aim of much art creation was to please, instruct, and educate the viewer, to create a sense of renewal or catharsis in viewing these works.[20] Much art was still created with a religious function in mind; the Roman Catholic Church continued to be a lavish patron of the arts. Civic functions also became prominent representations; works were created for public buildings to celebrate past achievements and memorable lessons from history.

[17] Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 7-8.
[18] Ibid., p. 8.
[19] Ibid., p. 72.
[20] Minor, *Art History's History*, 1994, p. 73.

Yet art still had much in common with the medieval tradition. Items were usually still functional; there was little to "fine" arts in the sense of art for art's sake. What is now often known as the "decorative arts" were still widely collected by patrons.[21] The idea of the artist as genius, rather than mere artisan, was certainly emerging,[22] but only a select few men achieved this status; most creators of artistic or decorative objects were still seen as craftsmen. The works were still commissioned by a patron who most often specified the desired colour, content, and size of a work and the artist was expected to deliver the work on time and on theme. Artists were still praised for their skill in overcoming technical issues, not always their creative and imaginative compositions.[23] It is also important to remember that despite all the praise for the humanistic ideas of the Renaissance, this was still a time in which women as artists were marginalized and many media devalued. Embroidery was viewed a pastime for idle noblewomen, not a creative medium for important commissions:

> Fine art was painting, a profession, a male pursuit. It required divine inspiration and the ability to reason. Craft was embroidery, the domain of the female amateur. It required diligence, discipline, and the ability to perform fine handwork.[24]

While it is true that the trends from the Renaissance and Middle Ages continue to have an impact on the current art world, most scholars agree that it is only with the modern period of the last two hundred years that "art" as we understand it developed as a

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[21] Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 38. The decorative arts are often regarded more as crafts today, despite post-modern challenges to the idea. They often include embroidery and other textile arts, as well as ceramics and metalwork. Patrons were just as likely, if not more so, to commission elaborate dinnerware as large scale sculptures in this period. Art historical study traditionally focused on the "fine" art objects, but this has begun to change in post-modern theory. Despite this, it is still rare that one finds an art exhibit incorporating all of these media; paintings are exhibited together with sculpture, but rarely with wall hangings, ceramics or silver work.
[22] Ibid., p. 40.
[23] Ibid., pp. 47-53.
[24] Fehr, *Dogs Playing Cards,* 1993, p. 31.

concept in Western society. Revolutionary changes occurred in the idea of art and the institutions and systems that sponsored and collected it in the Western world. Art became available to the middle classes, not just the elite. Especially after the French Revolution, public galleries and museums of art were built so that the public could view artworks (often removed from their original context and function) in a large collection by many artists from many times and places. Art appreciation and art collecting became serious pastimes. In the nineteenth century art history also emerged as field of scholarly study. Photography, in addition to creating a new media for art creation allowed the wide dissemination of images of all forms of art, and thus their wider appreciation, study, and democratization.

The notion of art as "fine art" is fairly recent, evolving through the Renaissance and Enlightenment.[25] It specifically is derived from the French term, *les beaux -arts*, which emerged to describe the visual arts and literary modes like poetry in the eighteenth century, and to distinguish them from the other arts, like sign paintings and shoemaking. With this distinction came the view of art as something to please, something tasteful, beautiful, not necessarily functional. The idea of the artist as genius was also tied into this linguistic distinction. The "fine" or "beaux" prefix was largely dropped in the nineteenth century, leaving "art" to stand alone. Other creative activities such as shoemaking or sign painting were no longer considered an art but mere craft.[26] From the seventeenth century onwards, oil paintings and cast sculptures were art. Watercolours were not considered to be serious art, but for use in preparatory sketches by professionals before they did the serious final version in oil, or for expression by amateurs.

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[25] Shiner, *The Invention of Art,* 2001, p. 3.
[26] Ibid., pp. 80-97.

Embroidery and other textile arts were crafts, pastimes for women and not serious artistic creations, these trends that had begun in the Renaissance now being solidified.

During the enlightenment, and continuing into the modern period, art became more and more detached from life and its traditional functions. Artists still created works for churches, civic buildings and increasingly businesses, but this was not the main market. As time progressed the emergence of a wealthy upper middle class created a new and larger body of possible consumers of art objects. The art market began to revolve around works produced for sale to this general public, rather than the creation of images for a select group of patrons who usually picked the subject. Eventually, artists began to produce works with the idea that they would be exhibited in the many now public museums and galleries that developed in this period. The idea of the "artist" solidified; they were seen as creative individuals, even geniuses. Art institutions grew almost exponentially, from Academies to Salons to Galleries. These institutions existed to exhibit art as a thing unto itself. The physical object became the focus, not the function behind it, or its sponsor or patron. While many do argue the merits of the freedom that the new market gave artists, it is important to remember that if the artist wanted to eat, he (it was usually a he) had to produce works that the public wanted to see. Set themes were still prominent for many years, and the repetitive subjects painted in the academies were still often considered fine art by the general public.

The idea of taste or aesthetics evolved, and pleasure became the main focus of art,[27] at least until the twentieth century and its early anti-art movements. With the development of the aesthetic, paintings and other works came to be admired primarily for their formal qualities, such as colour, composition, line and style, not their didactic

[27] Ibid., pp. 130-135.

qualities, as had been seen in previous ages. One's personal taste in art was important and revealing. There was good taste and popular taste, and the two were usually not the same thing! Class (and education) continued to be an important determining factor in regards to taste. This is the period when connoisseurship emerged. People who were wealthy enough went on a grand tour visiting important architectural and artistic sites, galleries, and museums, and thereby cultivated an air of education and sophistication of their own importance as elite. To be a connoisseur, an aspect of art study that is still prominent, one must view the original not reproductions. Art is valued based on who created it and its technical and formal success.

Throughout this period there was a strong tradition of academic art. The academies trained artists in traditional fashions, and many continued to paint narrative historical scenes. This mode of art is now often ignored, but it was the basis of popular art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The interpretation of art as "fine arts" has led to a narrow view of art over the past two centuries. Until the twentieth century, art consisted of paintings and sculptures produced by trained artists who studied and exhibited in the Academies. There was a hierarchy in place determining the importance of genres of paintings: historical and narrative paintings were the pinnacle, usually followed by portraits, with landscapes and still lives often seen as less important. Throughout this period there has also been a strong tradition of avant-garde movements challenging the academics and traditionalists and eventually receiving recognition for their work after a long period of struggle.

People have protested against this separation of art from craft and art from life since the tradition began. Many artists were left behind from the beginning, their work

defined as craft, not art. The French Revolution tried to integrate art and life again, and the Arts and Crafts movement in nineteenth-century England sought to elevate craft to "fine" art status, but neither had a major lasting impact on this development. Academies had a vested interest in maintaining the separation, and defining the idea of fine art as their own. Artists who were educated by the academies produced fine art; people in the guild system or various graphic businesses produced craft and decoration. It is important to note that among other things, these divisions were closely linked to class and gender divisions as well.[28]

Western art began to experience dramatic changes in the late nineteenth century when artists started to paint images of everyday activities and people, instead of mythological, biblical, or historical subjects. Dramatic change occurred further with the Impressionists who, instead of painting traditional subjects, were interested in the effects of light and shade on any object. The Impressionists were followed by many more avant-garde "isms" that challenged accepted ideas even further: Post Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism, to name but a few. This period, categorized now as the modern period, involved artist experimentation in media, style, and content. Photography, collage, performance art, and a multitude of other new forms of expression emerged. The modern period is generally considered, in art historical study to end by the mid-twentieth century when we enter the post-modern phase. Some even believe that we have now moved past the post-modern age.

Modern and post-modern art of the twentieth century derived its ideas from a multitude of sources, often expressing philosophical ideas and dealing with political issues. Some of it is simply concerned with formal elements and the aesthetics of a work,

[28] Fehr, *Dogs Playing Cards,* 1993, pp. 47-49.

while much served as a commentary on modern life. While naturalism in art is still seen in many works, abstraction,[29] and non-representational art are now prominent.

With the coming of post-modernism in art in the 1960s, media has ceased to have the same importance as in the past. To many artists of the post-modern age, art is primarily about expressing an idea or feeling. Anything is used, from paint to garbage, from bodily fluids to computer circuitry. Art does not even have to create a physical object, as Happenings and Performance art have shown. Art is often social protest, with artists trying to force the viewer to think about issues and events. Many people find this type of art disturbing, shocking, and even question whether it is art. It may seem to many people that some artists actively seek to offend the public, but in reality most are usually trying to express their ideas and beliefs, or to challenge widely held assumptions and ideas.

These art trends are the primary focus in the mainstream study of art history. There have always been artists working beyond these boundaries, although they do not receive as much scholarly attention. Many artists still create paintings of landscapes and still-lifes to sell to the general public today. These types of works are often not categorized by critics and scholars as fine art. These distinctions lay the groundwork for the label "documentary art" to be applied to certain types of Canadian art. If "art" is not considered worthy of gallery or fine art status, it often finds other purposes, or identities or uses, some of that undoubtedly in Canadian archives.

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[29] Many people today are often confused about the nature of abstract art. Abstract art is based upon an object of some sort, but presents it in an abstract way. Cubist art is abstract, for example. Non-representational art is not meant to represent any particular item or object. Artists such as Jackson Pollock or Guido Mollinari are non-representational.

By the twentieth century, many artists challenged the accepted ideas of art. They not only challenged certain conventions propounded by art scholarship, many also fought galleries and challenged institutional ideas about what was considered fine art. They still believed in their elevated status as artists and saw their works as fine art, but they did not want to conform to the previous notions of fine art. Shoemaking is not considered an art, even in post-modern discourse. Gluing a shoe to a canvas to protest Third World labour conditions, however, can be art. Post-modern thought has brought issues such as these to the table for discussion and people now are aware of the changing conceptions of art across time and space and the artificial and constructed nature of the limitations of definitions that have been imposed on it. Moreover, post-modernism questions conceptual boundaries and borders, thereby suggesting that the distinctions between "fine" or "documentary" art, art and craft, galleries and archives, may upon investigation be less obvious than before.

Art in Canada: 1665 to the present

Canadian art in many ways lagged behind the contemporary scene in Europe until the twentieth century.[30] There are many reasons for this; Canada is a relatively young country, with a small population spread out across a vast territory. For roughly the first two hundred years (beginning with the first settlers in New France), a scattered rural population prohibited the art community from growing and expanding. Most of the first European settlers to this country also had little time for leisure activities such as art, as

[30] In this usage, art in the Western European context is being denoted. The Aboriginal populations of the continent had many of their own traditions that led to the creation of objects of beauty that have come to be seen as art, whether or not that was the intent of the creator. However, for the majority Canada's history as province and country, these objects have been ignored or treated more as museum specimens. While a fuller study of the treatment of these objects, and their relevance to Canadian art history would be very interesting, if falls beyond the boundaries of this thesis.

they were establishing the beginnings of a European-based civilization. This dispersal of population made it difficult for the first artists to make a living at their craft; with little market for their wares they were forced to leave the country or earn money by other means. For the most part, amateurs created the art of English-speaking Canada until the nineteenth century. Quebec had a few professional artists residing in the province from its earliest days, and its arts societies and communities were generally established earlier than their English counterparts.

Another feature that influenced Canadian art development was the fact that Europe was far away and the journey by sea was long, expensive, and often dangerous, so it took time before current European artistic trends made themselves evident on a continent on the other side of the world. Wars often interrupted contact between the two continents, further slowing down the exchange of ideas. As Canada grew and prospered and art production increased, it became obvious that Canadians also had slightly different taste from people in Europe.[31] Eventually, a distinctive Canadian style emerged, but it was still influenced by international trends.

Canada has a rich artistic past. In spite of this, according to many early Canadian art historians, it was not until the nineteenth century that “Canadian Art” had its beginnings,[32] an assertion that clearly illustrates changing attitudes towards art and artists. Although art had been created long before the nineteenth century for a variety of reasons, and served a variety of functions in society, it had not been valued by many in the past as art. Some critics also advocated a true “Canadian” art, and they did not count

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[31] Comparing Canadian and European art in this period, it becomes evident that Canada was often more conservative and prudish in its taste.

[32] William Colgate, *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development*. Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1993, p. 1. Colgate sees Canadian art as beginning with artists like Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff. He sees Canadian art developing at an earlier date than other scholars, as many considered the Group of Seven as the first truly Canadian painters until a change in ideas in the mid twentieth century.

earlier works done in the European styles of the time. Some even saw the work as historical documentation rather than art, especially since much of it strove to document the new landscape and pioneer developments.[33] In general, the formal or academic study of Canadian art has been and continues to be the study of paintings.[34]

Art production in the Western sense did begin in Canada's earliest days, in New France. After it was established as a French royal colony in the 1660s, immigrants began arriving in greater numbers. This small colony was in many ways dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed, most art produced in the colony had a religious function and subject matter. In New France the church was often the main social centre. Few paintings survive from this period, but there are enough to give a feeling for the type of art created and used. Religious narrative and portraits of prominent religious figures were popular. Church paintings often were copies of themes well established in Europe, especially scenes from the life of Christ and the Saints, but there were also Canadian-based images that dealt with the conversion of the Aboriginal people. All known artists of this period were also clerics; Abbe Hughes Pommier and Frère Luc are two of the most prominent figures.[35] These two men are often seen more as European painters working in Canada than as Canadian since they worked exclusively within French styles. As time progressed and the colony became more prosperous, wealthy homes often included a devotional image or a portrait of a family member.[36] Much of the art created in this period has subsequently been seen as naïve, provincial, and lagging behind Europe

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988; and J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.
[35] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, pp. 6-8. Frère Luc is often seen as the most talented artist of this period; he only resided in New France for about a year. He was sent from France (where he was trained as a court artist) to decorate the churches of the colony.
[36] Ibid., p.13.

in style. There was an amateur tradition as well; people often created *ex-voto* images as thanks for miraculous salvation. These are small painted images, left in churches or shrines as thanks to saints who helped people in their time of need. It is also true that there must have been other types of artists, or artisans working in this period. Numerous sculptures, primarily of wood, and other decorative objects, such as fine silver or ornaments, would have also been required for a church. However, at this point, scholarship on media other than paintings in early New France is sparse.

With the British conquest of New France, other types of art began to be created in what would become Canada. This newer art did not necessarily relate to religion, although devotional art continued too.[37] In the early years of British exploration and occupation, most painting was created by men of the various military garrisons and usually consisted of topographical sketches. Many British officers were trained at Woolwich Academy in England, and this involved instruction in the creation of topographical landscapes and watercolours. In the days before the camera, it is easy to see why it was considered useful to create detailed images of the land for military reasons, but other factors also influenced these images:

> The topographical views of military officers were in fact simply one manifestation of the romantic inclination of English gentlemen of the later eighteenth century to delight in the splendors of natural scenery or in anything they found in their travels that was charmingly primitive, rough, quaint or exotic - in a word, picturesque.[38]

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[37] Again, art production in British areas of North America must have predated the conquest of New France; however, it is only after this period that historical surveys of Canadian art introduce this subject. See both Harper's *Painting in Canada* and Dennis Reid's *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, two major introductory surveys of Canadian art history. Both are organized regionally and chronologically. Harper begins his book with "Part One: The French Colony (1665 – 1759)", and chapter one of Reid is entitled "Painting in New France 1665-1760.

[38] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, p. 19.

Today these sketches are often more valued for their historical qualities depicting past times and places, with few seen as first-rate, creative art, or art of a "gallery" quality, although works by artists such as James Pattison Cockburn who worked in this tradition can be found in both galleries and archives. Painting of this sort was considered a proper pastime for gentlemen, and useful to inform people back home what the landscape looked like, for military or immigration purposes, or even to illustrate published accounts of travels, which were popular books at this time. [39]

Yet there was little market for art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the English colonies. Even when large-scale immigration began to occur and towns grew up around the garrisons in Halifax, Kingston, and other inland areas, the still small British North American population that could not support professional artists. Itinerant artists and amateurs filled the need for images at this time. The government was not greatly interested in artistic patronage, so the prime market for painters in English Canada was the wealthy middle class that used paintings to decorate homes. Having such works was also a visible example of one's material success and good taste. Landscapes and portraits were the most common types of art for such domestic spaces.

Quebec City had a larger, more established population at this period. There was also a certain level of prosperity among the merchants of Montreal. This created opportunities for portraitists and even landscape artists in the two cities, and an art

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[39] The travel genre was a popular one in England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Artists such as Paul Kane wrote and published accounts of their travels. (See Paul Kane's *Wandering of an artist among the Indians of North America: From Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's territory and back again.* Originally published by Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts in London, 1859. Some enterprising officers that had been stationed in Canada also found it lucrative to publish their accounts, such as James Pattison Cockburn. See Michael Bell and W. Martha E. Cook, *The Last lion…; rambles in Quebec with James Pattison Cockburn, incorporating Quebec and its environs, a reproduction of the 1831 guidebook attributed to J.P. Cockburn*, with an introduction written in 1975. Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre Exhibition catalogue, 1978.

community began to develop. Some have classified this as the "Golden Age" of Quebec.[40] By 1847 the Montreal Society of Artists was holding regular exhibitions of the works of professional artists.[41] This had been encouraged by renewed contact with Europe. After the conquest of New France, Quebec's ties with France were weakened and the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars made contact even more tenuous.[42] When peace came in 1815 two French priests imported a large amount of art to sell to Canadian churches. Most of it was bought instead by Joseph Legaré, who set up a private museum. These paintings, while often not of prominent European artists, introduced new ideas into the French-Canadian art scene. Rococo, Neo-classic, and Romantic painting styles all began to have an influence on Quebec artists.[43] Some artists also began travelling to Europe for art instruction. It is important to note that despite the growth of a secular art market, the Catholic Church continued to serve as an important patron to Quebec artists. This art is not often seen as "noteworthy" by art historians,[44] but the religious function of art was still prominent in the colony, and indeed continued well into the twentieth century.

Cornelius Kreighoff (1815-1872), an immigrant to Canada from Germany, also received his training in Europe. He has become very well known for his scenes of rural Habitant life, and images of the clothing, transportation, homes, lifestyles, and daily events of the average French Canadian. His primary market for these works was the

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[40] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, p. 53.
[41] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, pp. 30-31.
[42] Ibid., p. 41.
[43] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, pp. 53-55.
[44] Ibid., p. 55.

English- speaking governing class of Quebec.[45] These images, while now considered of "fine art" quality, also document the lifestyles of Canadians.[46]

A painter who would become a major figure in the Canadian canon emerged in Upper Canada in the nineteenth century. Born in Ireland in 1810 and raised in York (now Toronto), Paul Kane aspired to be an artist from a young age. Since there was not much of a market for art in York, he began his career as a decorative furniture painter and did the occasional portrait. His early portraits are often simple in their style and technique. He later travelled through Italy and England, copying the works of the great masters and improving his skill. Kane was inspired by the works of George Catlin while he was in England. Catlin, an American painter, had documented the life and customs of the western Aboriginal peoples of the United States. Kane decided to do the same thing when he returned to Canada in 1845. As he travelled throughout Rupert's Land, he sought to "preserve for posterity a record of the Indian chieftains, the customs of the tribes and the lands where they lived before change made such a record impossible."[47] Kane created extensive sketches during his two-year journey into the West (1846-1848), which he later worked up into finished canvases. While he set out with a documentary purpose in mind, and his work was often praised as truthful and accurate,[48] this is not necessarily the case. Kane's training in the classical tradition influenced they way he depicted the landscape, and his desire to make his paintings appealing to his audience led to extensive use of dramatic embellishments. While his sketches feature clear blue skies,

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[45] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, p. 63.
[46] Kreighoff's work has been collected both by archives, and more recently by art galleries which were once not interested in his work.
[47] J. Russell Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier, including The Wanderings of An Artist Among the Indians of North America.* Amon Carter Museum/ National Gallery of Canada: University of Texas Press, 1971, p. 15.
[48] Ibid., pp. 28-29. Both the sketches and finished works Kane created were praised by his reviewers as truthful.

the finished works have dramatic clouds and lighting, and people tend to be portrayed engaged in dramatic events. In short, he was influenced by the taste for the romantic in art and literature that was still prominent in the mid-nineteenth century.[49] His painting is not an accurate rendition of the peoples and the land because it was intended to meet his audiences' contemporary expectations of art. While documentary in function to some degree, it also reflected the decorative and exotic tastes in art that were prominent at the time. Kane did have a major impact on the current art scene, as his highly polished and skilled paintings provided an inspiration to many young aspiring artists.

The desire to document and paint the unknown was by no means restricted to Paul Kane or Cornelius Krieghoff. It was a tradition that had preceded, and would follow, them. Many other Canadian artists sought to document the land and its peoples, with varying degrees of accuracy. Krieghoff and Kane were only two of the most prominent and celebrated of the artists who worked within this tradition.

After Kane, the art scene in Canada West began to flourish (Upper Canada was renamed in 1841), many immigrants to Canada painted as a pastime, but it was still a fairly decentralized process. After Toronto's economy expanded in the 1860s, there was a wider market for art, although primarily for small pictures for decorating a home.[50] By this period as well, Romanticism began to lose its appeal. More young artists were travelling to Europe, and bringing back new ideas. The period of 1880 to 1915 is known as the "French Period" of Canadian art.[51] Paris was the focal point of new developments

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[49] Rachelle Ross, *Picturing the Prairies: The Art of Paul Kane, H. L. Hime and William G. R. Hind And the Canadian Expansionist Movement*. Unpublished paper for the class 11.733 History of Western Canada with Prof. G. Friesen, University of Manitoba, 2002-2003. This paper compares Kane's work to English landscapes of the time and shows the similarities. It also illustrates the differences between Kane's on-the-spot sketches and the oil paintings created once he returned to York.
[50] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, p. 68.
[51] Ibid., Chapter 7, "The 'French' Period in Canadian Art, 1880 to 1915", pp. 91-105.

in art, and artists vied to study such masters as William Bougereau, Jules Lefebvre, and Jean-Leon Gérôme. Naturalistic, detailed epic historical paintings became popular again, as well as domestic scenes. This style was absorbed by men such as William Brymner, Robert Harris, and Paul Peel who brought it to Canada and in turn taught it to new generations. Art associations and schools also began to emerge, providing training and exhibition possibilities to young artists at home.

Photography also arrived in Canada by the mid-nineteenth century, the most prominent photographs were produced by the Notman studios in various major cities. In addition to providing the public with a more affordable type of portraiture, the Notman studios and many others like them also provided regular employment for many of Canada's artists, allowing them to make a living while pursuing their artistic dreams. Photographs of the Canadian landscape and people began to be produced, and discussions about the nature of photography began that persist to this day. Initially, photographs were perceived by many as truthful and accurate renditions of an object or landscape, and indeed the first people to embrace the medium were scientists.[52] Indeed, for most of its history, the photograph has been perceived as a truthful medium, portraying an accurate reflection of the subject, whether it be scientific, historical, natural, domestic or personal.[53] Today, it is fairly well accepted that photographs are not truth; they are influenced by a multitude of factors, both before and after their creation. There has also been continual debate over the nature of photographs both in the art and archival world as

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[52] Joan M. Schwartz, "'Records of Simple Truth and Precision': Photography, Archives and the Illusion of Control." *Archivaria*. No. 50, Fall 2000, pp. 5-10. In this section of the article, Schwartz traces the early history of the Daguerreotype and Daguerre's decision to make his discoveries widely available by selling the information, in effect, to the French government, which then sent scientists to evaluate the process.

[53] This point is driven home frequently in Schwartz's "'Records of Simple Truth and Precision'" 2000, pp. 11- 22 and in her, "'We make our tools and our tools make us': Lessons from Photographs for the Practise, Politics and Poetics of Diplomatics," *Archivaria*. No. 40, Fall 1995, p. 44.

to whether they qualify as art. This debate, while interesting, does fall somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis. It can be safely concluded, however, that some photographs are undeniably created to serve an art function and some are created for many other reasons, including the desire to "document" history. The word photograph does mean to write with light and from the beginning photographs usefulness as a research tool and a record was recognized in Canada.[54] For the purposes of this discussion, it can be accepted that photographs can be archival records and "fine art."

During the same period that saw the growth of photography in Canada, Art Societies also continued to grow in importance, with the formation of the Ontario Society of Artists in 1873. Societies provided a regular context for art exhibitions, giving English-Canadian artists a forum beyond the travelling fairs. From this period on, Canadian art history does become, to some extent, more a history of individual artists, rather than trends, although there were still some broad trends in painting. Lucius O'Brien and John Fraser are two such figures, known for their individual achievements rather than for following a major trend, despite their notable participation in artistic organizations. Much art historical scholarship has been devoted to the study of these organizations, which are so important to the development of art in Canada.

As mentioned, Canada again began to look towards France for inspiration in the late nineteenth century, with most aspiring artists desiring to study in Paris in the studios of the great artists of the time.[55] Canadian painters seemed to focus on mainstream art for the most part, such as the large-scale historical works created by men such as Bougereau. Popular forms of art, especially those that were not too adventurous, were favoured in

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[54] Schwartz, "We make our tools and our tools make us," *Archivaria,* 1995, p. 41.
[55] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, p. 92.

these years. When William Brymner, son of the first Dominion archivist, Douglas Brymner, went to Paris to study art, his father urged him to learn to paint pictures that would sell.[56]

This is not to say that there was a lack of talent or imagination in Canada. The Academic-trained painters were often very skilled, and men such as Paul Peel became widely known and celebrated in Europe. In the field of art history, however, artists are often considered to be inferior by succeeding generations if they did not follow the avant-garde, and instead pleased the tastes of the general public. Academic painting of the late nineteenth century is often ignored in mainstream art historical study; it is the avant-garde artists such as the Impressionists that have been accepted into the canon. As time progressed, some of the trends from the continent began to trickle into Canada, and by the twentieth century the academic approach was criticized by many. There was still a taste for landscapes, one that has always been prominent in Canada since the first picturesque views. The main art trends of the 1890s to the early twentieth century have been characterized as influenced by the Dutch and Barbizon schools and "watered down Impressionism."[57]

Canada did have some artists who pushed the boundaries and were celebrated, including Ozias Leduc and Homer Watson. Watson was even been hailed as the "Turner of the North" by Oscar Wilde.[58] He was a self-taught artist who developed his own form of impressionism. Leduc produced paintings highly influenced by Catholic symbolism. Both were acclaimed during their lives and are still studied.

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[56] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, p. 219.
[57] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, p. 137. The Barbizon school was an informal school of landscape painters in Germany and France who painted landscapes *en plein air*, or created finished works, not only sketches, in the great outdoors.
[58] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

Landscape art continued to be popular beyond the nineteenth century. People were excited by the promise of the New World, its unspoiled beauty and vast natural resources. Monumental naturalistic landscapes showed the splendor of the land. There was interest in the North, but most of the artists who painted the arctic were British, not Canadian.[59] Canadian painters began to travel west after Confederation, to paint the new prairie and mountain landscapes. Nationalism is a theme often associated with these explorer artists. The Canadian Pacific Railway encouraged them and such nationalist sentiments by providing the opportunity to travel the rails and paint the newer areas of Canada. Artists wanted to document their new country and explore the various landscapes. The mountains and prairies provided exciting new opportunities for painters, while the forests of the East continued to inspire them with their picturesque streams and lakes. Artists such as C. W. Jefferys, John Fraser, and Lucius O'Brien were drawn to the new landscapes. In fact, the work of many of these artists has been studied primarily for its historical value for years; it was not until the 1970s that the artistic merit of works by painters such as Jefferys was acknowledged, in addition to their historical and evidential values.[60]

A major factor influencing the development of Canadian art throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the importance of various graphic design firms and the employment they offered to artists. It was still difficult to make ends meet as an artist, and many worked as illustrators and designers to enable them to continue their artistic work. In Toronto, *Grip* was a major employer of artists, and was where many of the Group of Seven first met. Brigdens in Winnipeg and Toronto was also a

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[59] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, pp. 163-168.
[60] Robert Stacey. *C.W. Jefferys*. Canadian Artist Series. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1985, p. 9.

major employer. Working as an illustrator, in addition to paying the bills, also had an impact on many artists' work and a decorative pattern and style can be seen in later art by, for example, J.E.H. MacDonald of the Group of Seven.

The early twentieth century saw the emergence of the Group of Seven, and their desire to paint the Canadian landscape in a new way. While it took some years for their style to gain popular acceptance -- initially they were referred to as the "hot mush school of painting" by a critic in 1913[61] -- their style dominated the Canadian scene from the 1920s to the 1940s, and their images are still regarded as national icons. While the group had its origins in the early 1910s, it did not officially coalesce as the Group of Seven until 1920. Many members' careers were interrupted by the First World War, in which many of them served as war artists, creating yet another type of record, and further honing their developing styles. After the war, the Group of Seven took centre stage in Canada. Many see the Group's work as Canada's first prominent achievement in painting, and tend to ignore what went before them.[62] Most people also do not realize that their style came to be the mainstream, much copied well into the 1940s, even after members of the Group of Seven transitioned into the Canadian Group of Painters and continued to explore other areas, such as abstraction and non-representational painting. Their stirring landscapes have become deeply embedded in the Canadian psyche and for many they really do paint Canada as it is. Even today, their paintings are able to stir nationalistic sentiments.

Many other artists were also working towards their own goals throughout the period dominated by the Group of Seven. Artists such as Edwin Holgate, Charles

[61] H. F. Gadsby, "The Hot Mush School," originally published in the *Toronto Daily Star*, December 12, 1913, reprinted in: Douglas Fetherling, ed. *Documents in Canadian Art*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1987, pp. 43-48.
[62] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, p. 166.

Comfort, Emily Carr and David Milne emerged in the postwar period. Abstraction and non-representational painting began to be seen in Canada. While some pioneers, such as Bertram Brooker, had been painting in this style as early as the 1920s, it was in the 1940s with prominent artists such as Lawren Harris, L.L. Fitzgerald, and Jock MacDonald that this work began to gain acceptance.

A new vigor was also emerging in Quebec. With the Quiet Revolution, arts once again rose to prominence in Quebec, and there was a great diversity in styles. John Lyman, an influential figure in the Quebec art world, returned to Canada from France because of the Second World War. He was influenced by Matisse and the Fauves and brought their rich colour and passion to painting in Quebec. Marion Scott Dale painted cityscapes and abstractions in addition to landscapes. The most prominent group in Montreal emerged around Paul-Émile Borduas. They called themselves "*Les Automatistes*," and while they were greatly influenced by the Surrealist movement in Europe they did develop a distinct style.[63] *Les Automatistes* strenuously opposed church control. Their abstract expressionist paintings did not immediately catch on in Quebec, even the intellectual community maintained a distance.[64] Eventually their work gained acceptance and continues to be influential to this day.

After the Second World War, Canada, like most of the Western world, diverged significantly from naturalistic painting, and abstraction became the prominent style. The lag time between Canadian and international trends began to shorten, with most "isms" figuring prominently in the gallery scene around the world. Neo-Dadaism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and so forth, were all practised by Canadian artists as much

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[63] Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* 1988, pp. 227-229.
[64] Ibid., p. 236.

as by their international contemporaries. In the mid-twentieth century, aestheticism and formalism were prominent art theories, seen in the influential ideas and writings of Clement Greenburg. Post-modernism is one of the recent philosophies that has been applied to art, and the theory of art.

It is also not until the twentieth century that art theory was discussed in connection with Canadian art. It is known that artists such as Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven were influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and its founder, William Morris. His ideas about art not only centered around promoting “crafts,” such as fabric and furniture design, as high art, but also celebrating one’s local natural environment in art, something seen very prominently in the Group’s celebration of the Canadian Shield country. Later, artists such as Lawren Harris became interested in movements like Theosophy. Such intellectual contexts continue to affect artist’s perceptions and their creations and this is an area that is receiving greater attention in scholarly study.

Art in general has become more international and less national in the post-war period, and despite post-modernism’s rejection of fine art’s hierarchies and pretensions, art is in many ways even further divorced from everyday life. Art is often very intellectual, and many people find it hard to appreciate “modern” art. Much work created today, such as the celebrated *Paradise Institute* by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, is more about ideas and their impact than it was in the past.[65] Artists who do still make art for the masses tend to make it in more traditional ways, and they are often left

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[65] This artwork, a Canadian contribution to the 2001 Venice Biennale, consists of a model of a movie theater. Viewers upon entering sat in a seat and wore special headphones which projected the sounds not only of the “movie” they were viewing, but noises made by other “movie goers,” immersing them into a situation with a strange melding of reality and illusion.

out of the narrative of art history. Post-modern art critiques political issues, current society, prejudices, and prominent ideas. It strives to make us question our values and assumptions.

Conclusion

Art itself has changed drastically in the Western tradition over the past thousand years. Especially over the past century, what works are valued in past art has also changed. Traditional, realistic and naturalistic works fell out of favour in the art world during the Modern era, but have continued to be popular with individual collectors. Art that was seen as documentary in purpose or execution was not really valued for its artistic qualities. Now much of that art is being re-evaluated, and actually praised and exhibited once again. This change can be seen in current exhibitions featuring artists like William Hind.[66] Post-modern thought has caused a further reevaluation of these ideas about the traditional canon of art, often resulting in a more positive appraisal of previously maligned art.

So, what is "art"? There is no simple answer. Art is many things to many people. In the Western tradition, most still think of art as a physical object that is visually pleasing and reflects genuine feeling by its creator. Yet within that generality, there remain many visually attractive works that are still not recognized in the "fine art" scene of today. Ideas about what art is and its function in society have changed dramatically throughout the course of Western history, and it is very likely that it will continue to change.

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[66] The Winnipeg Art Gallery organized a large William Hind exhibition in 2002. "Hindsight: William Hind in the Canadian West". Hind was a little known nineteenth-century Canadian artist whose art has received little recognition. He warranted a page or two in surveys of art history, but no more. The publication from this exhibition was written primarily by curator Mary Jo Hughes and was published by the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2002.

Early Canadian art often served fairly rigid functions, such as the religious images of early Quebec, and the topographical, picturesque, and military art of nineteenth-century English Canada. Art served as a social signifier, demonstrating the owner's wealth and taste. Landscape art and portraiture have always been prominent in Canada; they remained dominant until the 1940s. There have also been strong trends towards documentation in art. People wanted to create a record of the new country with its vast resources and stunning vistas, people, places, inventions, and accomplishments. People were also intrigued by the seemingly exotic Aboriginal people and created images of them. Much art of the nineteenth century sought to document the changing lives of Canadians and their society, and, later on, the great traumas of the two world wars had numerous "official" artists to depict these conflicts.

Now, in the post-modern period, expressing ideas and critiquing society have become popular themes in art, and in art criticism and art history. Art that was once seen as only documentary is again valued artistically, as are many other previously rejected genres. The unique development of Canadian art, especially the focus on painting Canada as a nation, and documenting its history visually, obviously contributed to its archival function and status as a documentary record. Now, as ideas about art and history continue to change, it is important to reassess "documentary art" in Canada to gain a deeper understanding of this subject. How archivists, the keepers of documents in society, have reacted to documentary art is, then, the next step in this exploration.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Definitions: Literature, Catalogue and Website Analysis

Documentary art is a bit of an abnormality in the archival world. It is not a category of record that has received much study or recognition compared to traditional textual holdings. This is perhaps because it is such a difficult category to define; only a vaguely stated definition is available in literature indicating that documentary art is art that is more important for its historical subject content or evidential qualities than for its aesthetic qualities. However, almost all art does contain historical and evidential properties, even if it is deemed of gallery "fine art" quality, and archival "documentary art" itself is not necessarily unpleasing to the eye. As a result, many archivists are slightly apprehensive about this media, possibly because they do not feel capable of using, explaining, or understanding its content without an art history background.[1]

To fully understand documentary art and the challenges it poses to archives, archivists and the public, this chapter will explore the development of this archival

[1] This apprehension is made clear in Barbara L. Craig and James O'Toole's article "Looking at Archives in Art," *American Archivist.* Vol. 63, no.1, Spring/Summer 2000, pp. 97-125.

category in Canada. The scholarly debate about these materials and the way they are initially presented to the public will also form part of this analysis. This will be done by discussing scholarly articles, exhibition and other catalogues, websites and on-line exhibitions and looking at how documentary art is defined and treated by archivists.

The beginning of documentary art as an archival medium in Canada dates back to Canada's first major archival institution which is now known as Library and Archives Canada (LAC). This institution began as the Archives Branch of the Department of Agriculture in 1872. In 1912 it became the Public Archives of Canada. In 1987 it was renamed the National Archives, and in 2004 it amalgamated with the National Library to form Library and Archives Canada. While much can be said for the pioneering efforts of the first Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner (whose son William was a prominent artist), it was under the supervision of his successor, Arthur Doughty, that the documentary art collection of the Archives was firmly established. Indeed, the total archives concept practised in Canada is directly influenced by his policy of collecting a variety of record media in addition to the traditional written text.[2]

The first record of an acquisition of art occurred in 1888,[3] but it was Doughty's plans to acquire actively pictorial records that lead in 1907 to the establishment of the Picture Division within the Archives. Doughty was partly inspired to collect such materials because he was dismayed by the "lifeless" quality of many Canadian history books.[4] The archives has continued to acquire and preserve art and other visual materials

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[2] Danielle Lacasse and Antonio Lechasseur. *The National Archives of Canada 1872-1997.* The Canadian Historical Association Historical Booklet No. 58, 1997, p. 7.
[3] Jim Burant et al. *A Place In History: Twenty Years of Acquiring Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the National Archives of Canada*. National Archives of Canada, exhibition catalogue, 1991. p. v.
[4] Greg Spurgeon, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archive." *Archivaria.* No. 17, Winter 1983-84, pp. 62-63.

of enduring historical and documentary value to Canadians.[5] Such a broad mandate makes it difficult to define documentary art as distinct from art. The assumption seems to be that documentary art is more realistic art that is trustworthy as visual evidence in depicting Canadian historical development. There is no real explanation of why this idea emerged, although in Doughty's time much art was realistic in its style. It was also often intended to be an accurate depiction, but one must look beyond artists' intentions when deciphering an artwork.[6] LAC's collection includes portraits of prominent people (both miniatures and conventional portraits), landscape and topographical art (urban and rural), paintings of historic events and images that document the ways of life of various Canadian peoples (with a strong focus on sketches and watercolours), and also includes posters, seals, medals, buttons and coats of arms, although not all of these media are actively acquired at the present time.[7] Doughty even commissioned artists to create modern interpretations of historical events for the archives collection.[8]

The Visual Heritage Division has gone through numerous changes since its beginning. The early focus of the collection was to document the nineteenth century in paintings, prints, drawings, and the like, while the twentieth century would be documented primarily through photography.[9] Until 1964, the focus was on prints, watercolours, and to some extent oil paintings, seals, and medals. In 1963 the division's interests expanded to include photographic and cinematic materials. By 1964 Doughty's

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[5] Jim Burant, *General Guide Series*: *Documentary Art and Photography Division*. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1992. p.1.

[6] Artistic training as well as personal experiences and ideas shape their work. Truth can also be relative, as artists can change an image for personal or even compositional reasons. Often what is left out of an image is as revealing as what is included. These are all important considerations when studying an artwork.

[7] Interview with Jim Burant, Acting Director of the Visual Heritage Division, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, October 19, 2004.

[8] Spurgeon, "Pictures and History," *Archivaria,* 1983-84, p. 62.

[9] Burant, *General Guide Series: Documentary Art and Photography Division,* 1992, pp. 1-3.

old Picture Division was divided into two sections, one for art and the other for photographic and cinematic materials and sound recordings. Oral history and electronic media were introduced. By 1975 the division was separated into three entities, the National Film, Television and Sound Archives, the National Photography Collection, and the Picture Division, which once again stood on its own, but included two sections, Medal, Heraldry and Costume, and Documentary Art.[10] The National Photography Collection and the Picture Division were re-united in 1986, and later with other visual media such as maps and films, to create what is now called the Visual Heritage Division. Various internal sections still exist for individual media.

The mish-mash of items that documentary art has encompassed over its history as an archival medium has been broad and ever changing. This has likely been a contributing factor to the confusion about what precisely "documentary art" includes. When archivists refer to documentary art, do they mean paintings and drawings which are considered art by most, or are they referring to heraldic devices or any image that is not a photograph or film? What about photography? Many in the "art world" have long seen it as an art form (although for others the debate still rages), but it has been separated from the Documentary Art section of LAC (and its predecessors) for long periods and indeed is often organized into separate collections in most archives. Photography is often perceived as a medium that is more realistic, or documentary, and historical, than art although, even before the digital age, it was fairly easy to alter and change a photograph through either developing, or staging, or cropping, and special printing technologies. In order to limit the scope of this thesis to a reasonable scale, documentary art will be

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[10] Raymond Vézina, *General Guide Series: Picture Division*. Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1983, p. 1.

understood as traditional "art" items, such as paintings, prints, and drawings, and not the seals, heraldic devices, medals, and coats of arms also included in the Visual Heritage Division. Photography may enter on the periphery of the discussion as it is an accepted art form, but it will not be a focus of discussion.

LAC and other archives use a variety of collection methods to obtain documentary art. Items can be donated by the general public, acquired through government departments and purchased through auction houses or from private collections.[11] As a result, LAC could often find itself in direct competition with the National Gallery and other art institutions to obtain certain images that not only relate to Canada's history, but also to its art history. The collection at Library and Archives Canada, while extensive, is not the only archival art collection in the country. Other Canadian archives, be they provincial, municipal, institutional, or educational, also follow the total archives idea and have diverse holdings in all media in their collections. As we have seen in Chapter Two, due to Canada's unique history, the need and desire to document was practised by many artists in many locations in the country.

Over the years, LAC has published a significant number of catalogues on its history and collection, specifically relating to documentary art. Despite this, it is hard to get a firm idea of what actually constitutes the "documentary" in documentary art from such literature. Researchers likely go into archives with a fairly clear understanding of what a written record is and how to use it, but many are not as aware that there is a variety of visual records available to them as well. Many users likely share the apprehension of O'Toole and Craig[12] in approaching visual records for information.

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[11] Burant, *General Guide Series: Documentary Art and Photography Division*, 1992, pp. 2-3.
[12] Craig and O'Toole, "Looking at Archives in Art," *American Archivist,* 2000, pp. 97-125.

If the historical evolution and mandate statements behind documentary art collection of LAC fail to clarify the nature of the art found in archives, an analysis of the relevant scholarly literature does help to understand the traditional definitions and assumptions about documentary art. A useful place to begin this exploration is with a quotation from the foreword of a publication of the then National Archives of Canada, *A Place in History: Twenty Years of Acquiring Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the National Archives of Canada*:

> What is archival art? The term suggests a limited and obscure scope. What artist intended his work for an archives? The answer is, of course, none. Most creators of records about our civilization did not have an archives in mind as they wrote that fateful letter or drew that exploratory map. Likewise, the artists whose work is now represented in the collections of archives across Canada thought only of their immediate needs as they produced their work. Those needs could have been to illustrate, to describe, to inspire, to educate, to propose, to symbolize, to opine, to praise or to condemn. However, it is the gift of the descendants to their forefathers to see in that work more than the first intent, to see the reflection of a nation, and to preserve these precious records to become the historical memory of our own descendants and every succeeding succeeding generation.
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> What makes a work of art valuable to an archives? The answer here, so apparently simple, is that the work must be revealing. It may reveal things, people, or events in a straight-forward manner, trying to represent the reality perceived by the eye with as little distortion and as much completeness as talent allowed to the hand of the creator. Or it may reveal the mind and intent of the creator and the society from which the work derives through symbolic or metaphorical means. The former gives us still lifes, portraits, landscapes and scenes of activity: the latter adds caricatures, commercial and ephemeral art, heraldry and commemorative art. However, the finest historical interpretations of all archival art occur when these two directions are seen to work together in one image: realistically produced art is seen to have an underlying value touching the opinions and desires of its generation, thereby revealing the heart as well as the body of another age.[13]

[13]Burant, *A Place in History,* 1991, p. iii, from the foreword by Lilly Koltun.

This is a beautiful passage, one that leaves no doubt as to the value and importance of art in archival collections as historical evidence and tangible cultural material linking us to our history. Its strong emotional pull is also evident in this telling. However, while presented as a definition, the only concrete fact in this passage qualifying documentary art is that it must be realistic, while heraldry can be symbolic. Why art must be realistic is not addressed. If symbols and metaphors can be decoded in other media such as a crest or coat of arms, it becomes harder to understand again this focus on realism in archival art. These ideas from LAC about documentary art are a good starting point for a discussion of the scholarly forays into the subject across the past twenty-five years, to see if additional light can be shone on these issues.

A useful article to put this idea of archival art into context is Jim Burant's "The Visual World in the Victorian Age,"[14] which helps one to understand how and why archives in Canada began to collect this medium. Burant is a well-known archivist who has worked in the documentary art collections at LAC for over 25 years and spent more than a decade as its chief manager. He begins the article by explaining, in a concise and informative manner, the inclusion of visual material in archives in Canada:

> Archivists who grapple with "total archives" sometimes wonder why their institutions collect not only many useful, beautiful, and well-documented paintings, drawings and prints, but also illustrated journals, postcards, trade-cards, scrapbooks, letterheads, old bills, advertisements, posters, photoprints, cartoons and all the other kinds of visual ephemera. Since visual images are common-place today, we tend to forget the tremendous advances made in the nineteenth century in their production and diffusion. [15]

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[14] Jim Burant, "The Visual World in the Victorian Age." *Archivaria.* No. 19, Winter, 1984-85, pp. 110-121.
[15] Ibid., p. 110.

It is very true that people take visual media of all kinds for granted in this day and age, and as often neglect the important historical information these objects and records contain. The body of Burant's article discusses the various technologies that allowed for mass production of images: woodblock printing, lithography, photography, and photo-engraving, as well as the distribution of images, and, finally, "a reaction to these developments by organizations which sought to sharpen Canadian aesthetic sensibilities in an effort to strengthen the cultural and moral foundations of nationhood."[16] This last section is quite telling. While the article specifically addresses certain types of visual materials that do not usually fit into the traditional art classification, it reminds us that all images are usually created for a reason or to fulfil a function. Understanding that function and use adds another level of context to the understanding to the record; simply knowing the names, dates and content of a piece can leave so much unsaid. This article also helps to explain why images were seen as an important record in Canada and thus collected by archives. As images became more widespread and people were able to see images of famous artworks as well as images from news around the world; "Canadians in the nineteenth century learned to communicate through pictures of every kind."[17] People were using and creating images with greater frequency and these images were often seen by the Victorians as important sources of information, whether it be a photograph showing Canada's westward expansion or a painting of a historical event. Visual images communicated current events in an easy-to-understand way and, in addition to this, there was a prevalent view that appreciation of fine paintings could lead

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., p. 121.

to a development of good taste and aesthetics.[18] It was in this milieu that Canada's first archives were conceived and created. This was before we began to be bombarded with images of every kind, in every conceivable location, at all hours of the day. Today images are so commonplace we often ignore them, but this was not so in the late nineteenth century.

Burant's article provides a good introduction to visual archives as it helps to explain their importance in early Canada, and thus a dimension of their archival value in reflecting that importance. Chronologically, however, the first article to tackle specifically the subject of documentary art was written by Canadian archivist Hugh Taylor. Throughout his career, Taylor was consistently at the forefront of new ideas in archives and his article, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,"[19] first published in 1979, likely served as a wake-up call to many archivists, forcing them to contemplate the valuable resources that many archives possessed, but had not fully understood or exploited. In this article, Taylor briefly traced the history of art production from Ancient Greece through to modern times, highlighting the important information contained in these records. He then examines visual records in terms of archival principles that were developed to deal with textual records. It is not necessary to reiterate his argument here, but in his usual eloquent way, Taylor firmly establishes that much art has value as an archival record. He also highlights many of the issues and problems surrounding the idea of documentary art. It is noted that artists are selective in what is depicted, even in representational paintings and that we must be aware of these

[18] Here again we see the philosophy of aesthetics, as discussed in Chp. 2, pp. 5-6.
[19] Hugh Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist", originally published in *The American Archivist.* No. 42, October 1979, pp. 417-428. Republished in *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections by Hugh A. Taylor*, edited by Terry Cook and Gordon Dodds. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2003. This essay appears on pages 75-89.

"limitations."[20] The difference between how art galleries and archives approach to these works is noted as well: "…galleries staffed by curators and historians whose concern is with art and excellence" whereas archives are concerned with the information conveyed by the painting.[21]

There are some interesting qualifications in Taylor's discussion of the document. Early on in the article, he suggests the use of the word "iconography" instead of art, arguing that it might be a more acceptable term, since "art" is so loaded.[22] Also, in his discussion of authenticity, he states that "we can take comfort in the relative obscurity of much that we hold."[23] This is not necessarily true. Archives often hold works by prominent Canadian and international artists – artists who are also collected and desired by galleries, such as Paul Kane, Cornelius Krieghoff, or the numerous English military artists including James Pattison Cockburn, whose work Taylor uses to highlight the documentary and evidential properties of this genre.[24] These artists figure prominently in Canadian as well as international art history. Authenticity in art is also a different issue than in archival analysis. Even if the date, artist, and custodial history are all well documented, the truthfulness of the image is not guaranteed! The image is inherently biased due to the artist's ideas, preconceptions, social context, and even training.

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[20] Ibid., p. 80.
[21] Ibid., p. 84.
[22] Ibid., p.78. It is true, as we have seen in the previous chapter, that the notion of art itself is hard to define, and carries different meanings to different people; however, simply replacing the word does not likely help, but instead adds another layer of confusion. Most of the general public would then have to first figure out what was meant by iconography and then wonder how it was different from art. For those with artistic training, it would be equally confusing as iconography is traditionally associated with symbols in art and conventional symbolic icon paintings, so one would wonder if the discussion is about Byzantine or Baroque art.
[23] Ibid., p. 80.
[24] Ibid, p. 81. Military topographical works often figure prominently in discussions of documentary work, and are the focus of another article that will be discussed, Jim Burant's, "The Military Artist and the Documentary Art Record," *Archivaria.* No. 26, Summer 1988, pp. 33-51. It is also important to note that The National Gallery of Canada also has a prominent collection of Cockburn's works. (Interview with Rosemary Tovell, Curator of Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Canada, October 18, 2004.)

Elements of a painting could even have been changed simply to make a more pleasing composition. Across history, few artists have tried to portray an event exactly as it happened. History paintings were meant to be impressive, grand and moving, but not a mirror of what happened.

In Taylor's discussion of examples of documentary art, he focuses on Victorian picturesque views and topographical sketches. These are undeniably documentary in nature, but are also included in any historical survey of Canadian art.[25] Documentary art as collected by Library and Archives Canada is also a much broader category; however the collection of seals, heraldry and stamps is not very much in evidence in the literature![26]

Taylor also acknowledges the conceptual qualities of art and after a discussion of reading the "codes" of artists (the schema used to create images), Taylor begins one of his most intriguing paragraphs:

> Are *all* paintings, then, to be regarded as documentary record? At this point common sense must prevail, but let it be the *senum communis* which engages all our senses and faculties. Clearly we must try to distinguish between an artist's personal record expressed through the painting in non-representational terms, or a work of art which has no point of reference with the world of appearances, and the kind of documentary art which seeks primarily to record, using this expression in its widest sense to encompass paintings which may only remotely look like their subjects but express other qualities, in particular the creation of profound generalized statements about their subjects.[27]

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[25] The two major Canadian art historical surveys are J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) and Dennis Reid's *A Concise History of Canadian Painting,* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988). In Harper, Chapter Four is entitled "Early Painting in British North American," and deals primarily with British Topographers. Chapter Five, "The Aftermath of the Seven Years War" and Chapter Six, "British Army Topographers in Eastern Canada" also deal with this genre of art production. Chapter Two in Reid is "Painting in British North America" and also discusses military topography in depth.

[26]Very few publications on documentary art look at more than paintings and drawings; only publications such as the *General Guide* series outlined all aspects of the collection. (Burant, *General Guide Series: Documentary Art and Photography Division*, 1992 and Vézina, *General Guide Series: Picture Division,* 1983).

[27]Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," 2003, p. 83.

This is an important discussion of what documentary art is and the problems inherent in it. How much art is documentary and should go to archives rather than art galleries? After this Taylor again mentions military art, war art, and genre paintings, as well as some of the inconsistencies that allow this art to exist in both spheres. His article urges further work in this area and lays out some of the problems it faces. He also provides, although somewhat vaguely, what has become an accepted definition of documentary art: art that focuses on realistic landscapes and images of Canadian life. Military topographic works, war art, watercolours, and sketches are seen as documentary, as is a study collection, or a group of works by an artist assembled in chronologic order along with other types of records (letters, sketchbooks, and so on).[28] Taylor concludes with a gentle reminder that the roles of archivist and curator, archives and art gallery, still need to be defined more clearly.[29] These issues are still waiting to be addressed over twenty years later.

Only a few articles have followed Taylor's to explore the nature of documentary art. A related series of articles, by staff members of the then Public Archives of Canada. on Canada's "Total Archives" tradition, appeared in 1980 and 1981 *Archivaria,* the scholarly journal published by the Association of Canadian Archivists. The first article, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives'"[30] by Terry Cook, a government records archivist at the time, was intended in many ways as a wake-up call to archivists about the unintended effects that "total archives" was having on archives. He

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[28] Ibid., pp. 84-85.
[29] Ibid., p. 86.
[30] Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on "Total Archives, '" *Archivaria.* No. 9, Winter 1979-1980, pp. 141-149.

argued that the two archival guiding concepts of "total archives" and provenance[31] were in conflict. Never intended to be read as a call to abandon collecting in a variety of media, as some reacted, Cook illustrated through a variety of examples that the practice in most Canadian archives of collection and description by media, rather than by fonds, was in conflict with the concept of provenance and with the goals of good public service. While storage of various media separately for conservation reasons makes good sense, various media were not only being separated not only physically, but also intellectually. Photographs, maps, or other visual objects were being removed from government files, given to media departments and described separately. Cross-referencing between media-based departments rarely occurred. This resulted in duplication of labour, internal conflicts, and media-based specializations that made it difficult for researchers to transcend media barriers. Cook made few direct references to art; instead visual media was discussed as a whole. He said that archives should not collect works based on their aesthetic qualities, since other cultural institutions exist to ensure that items with aesthetic value are kept.[32]

The response to this article was quite heated. "The Tyranny of Tradition" by Andrew Birrell,[33] then Director of the National Photography Collection of the Public Archives, seemed to ignore Cook's main argument in "The Tyranny of the Medium." Beginning with an assertion that Schellenberg[34] allowed for a loose use of the principle of

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[31] The principle of provenance guides archival arrangement and description. Provenance maintains that the records remain in their original order, keeping the identity of their original creator as a distinct body or group of records, and thus maintains the function of the records across time.
[32] Ibid., pp. 143 and 146.
[33] Andrew Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," *Archivaria.* No. 10, Summer 1980, pp. 249-252.
[34] Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg was the leading American archivist. He worked in the United States National Archives of the mid-twentieth century. His publications established modern notions dealing with records, and the changing record production of society. He is credited with the development of the ideas of record series and record groups, modern appraisal, and records management.

provenance in regard to visual media, he defends the separation of archival material by media. Birrell advocates that media-specialists are better able to help researchers, and that researchers are usually only interested in a specific media.[35] Of interest to this thesis is Birrell's reliance on "fine art" examples, such as Picasso's *Guernica,* to make his point, that even abstract art – over Cook's objections – could be documentary of a time and place. The historical relevance and information contained in *Guernica* is undisputed; however very few would asign it to an archival collection.[36] If a firmer idea had existed at this point of what "documentary" art was, the insecurities evident in Birrell's reading of Cook's article may not have existed. Birrell rightly points out that all art possesses "documentary qualities,"[37] but his article almost reads as if he is worried someone wishes to remove visual media from the archives, instead of merely ensure that all work in a given *fonds* or series is described together and managed by archivists with subject specialties rather than media specialty.

The next response to this debate was written by a group of film media archivists at the Public Archives, Ernest J. Dick, Jacques Gagné, Josephine Langham, Richard Lochead, and Jean-Paul Moreau. Their article, "Total Archives Come Apart," was a brief statement of support for Cook's view that separate description of archival records by media alone was causing problems for the user, in addition to a lack of coherent application of the principle of provenance.[38] Cook himself then replied with a second article, "Media Myopia."[39] Again he does not delve into "documentary art" in depth, but addresses visual archives more generally. There is no doubt in Cook's mind about the

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[35] Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," *Archivaria,* 1980, p. 251.
[36] Ibid., p. 250.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ernest J. Dick, et al, "Total Archives Come Apart," *Archivaria.* No. 11, Winter 1980-1981, pp. 224-227.
[39] Terry Cook, "Media Myopia," *Archivaria.* No. 12, Summer 1981, pp. 146-.157.

archival relevance of much art or visual material. Cook stresses the archives mandate in serving not only the general public, but its sponsors by ensuring that the archival record, in all media, are collected, arranged and described in accordance with the principle of provenance. Cook provides a number of examples of how government records have been haphazardly collected, and the challenges ahead as records creation became increasingly complex.

Again, while archival art was not a focus of these discussions for all but Andrew Birrell, this debate over total archives helps provide context for the consideration of "documentary art" that followed. The divisions that existed at the then Public Archives of Canada between media helps one to understand why the focus on defining documentary art might not have been predominant. As media specialists, archivists worked within their section, and often had no need to work or discuss ideas across sections.[40] Most documentary art archivists worked closely with their collections and would be familiar with the general idea of documentary art as realistic art with accurate depiction of historical events. With no need to discuss this with colleagues outside a small area, there would be little incentive to debate the issue. Many media archivists were unfamiliar with textual archival collections or fundamental archival principles. Lack of clarity in defining the various media in a "total archives," including documentary art, and their appropriate roles and treatment, almost invited the kinds of misunderstandings that flared up in this pivotal "total archives debate."

Discussion of documentary art was teaken up again in 1983-84 in *Archivaria*. The first, by Brian S. Osborne, is entitled "The Artist as Historical Commentator:

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[40] Dick et al, "Total Archives Come Apart," *Archivaria,* p. 226.

Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal."[41] Before launching into his in-depth case study of the early eighteenth-century artist, Osborne discusses some of the broader roles of the artist. He sees art as "a documentation and interpretation of the society of which it is a part and upon which it provides commentary."[42] This acknowledgment of society's role in art production is refreshing in archival literature, although it should be noted that Osborne is a historical geographer, not an archivist. However, to return to E. H. Gombrich, as quoted in Chapter One, seeing art as a reflection of the age is too vague a notion.[43] The problem here is the difference between the individual and society. It is undoubtedly true that all artists are influenced by their times, either to celebrate or protest against them. However, as an individual, their own unique personal ideas, circumstances, and life experiences are also important in shaping their creation. Once again, it is a fine line, a balance between the individual and the whole, but both sides are important to consider. Much art that has been created does not strive to directly interpret or comment on the artist's time or place. In today's understanding of post-modern ideas, it is also the viewer who attributes many meanings to an artwork, which adds yet another layer to its interpretation.

Osborne discusses art's role as evidence and approaches art through the historical method to retrieve the information it contains. The authenticity of art is assessed, and Osborne concludes that topographical views and accurate renditions are preferable for students trying to reconstruct history, over the artist's more imaginative and sensitive

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[41]Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," *Archivaria*. No. 17, Winter 1983-84, pp. 41-59.
[42] Ibid., p. 41.
[43] E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*. London: Phaidon, 1999, p. 271.

renderings of reality.[44] What, however, of the artist who unintentionally or even intentionally renders things inaccurately? Is this not itself also important evidence for reconstructing history?[45] He also assesses the artist's interpretation of a scene and the fact that not all art is created in service to itself, but sometimes for a direct purpose.[46] In his discussion of documentary art, Osborne's emphasis does seem to be on what are perceived as accurate and trustworthy styles, such as topographical and picturesque views. Osborne does add:

> Art as objective fact, as a manipulated half-truth, art as imagined reality, art as a catalyst for developing consciousness, all of these have had a part to play in Canada's art history. And, as such, the art exists for the historian to examine and attain a better understanding of various dimensions of past realities.[47]

He acknowledged that there is much more information in a painting than simply the subject content, something that does not always seem to be addressed by archives. He discusses the artist as reporter, interpreter, artisan, conceptualizer, and also art as history. He highlights many of the roles and various influences on artists, such as the infludence of a patron on a work, which often resulted in the form of a work being dictated to the artist.[48] With these ideas outlined, Osborne then goes on to a detailed description of Thomas Burrowes' life, art and influences as an artist in Ottawa and his work depicting the construction of the Rideau Canal in the 1820s and 1830s.

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[44] Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator," *Archivaria,* 1983-1984, pp. 42-43.
[45] For example, again consider the finished paintings of Paul Kane. While his sketches of his westward journey are seen as relatively accurate, when he worked the finished canvases, he dramatized the subject matter, rendered objects such as buffalo pounds inaccurately, and so on. Is this not telling about his, and his society's understanding, of the Aboriginal people Kane sought to document?
[46] Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator," *Archivaria,* 1983-1984, pp. 44-45.
[47] Ibid., p. 49.
[48] Ibid., pp. 42-49.

Osborne's article is followed in the same *Archivaria* issue by Greg Spurgeon's "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archive."[49] This article tackles directly the subject of this thesis: the vague distinctions that exist between archival documentary art and gallery "fine" art. To put it as bluntly as does Spurgeon, gallery art is defined by its beauty; archival art is documentary due to its evidential features, although these features are not always obvious. Spurgeon (a gallery collection manager by profession) discusses the early history of both the National Gallery and Library and Archives Canada and outlines their collecting mandates, which were created at similar times with legislation to support their distinctive roles. The National Gallery was to encourage and cultivate "correct artistic taste and Canadian interest in the fine arts" and also to exhibit such works.[50] At the turn of the century, the then-Public Archives was authorized to spend money on prints and other art works reflecting Canadian life.[51] Spurgeon then recounts a few instances of disagreement between the two entities over which should acquire certain kinds of art, such as Canada's official War Art.[52] This is itself evidence that these institutions have long wrestled with issues. Tastes change and an artwork that is not considered worthy of gallery status by one generation might be embraced by the next. Content and form are difficult to separate and not everyone will agree about which designation applies to a specific work.

Spurgeon discusses the criteria paintings must meet to become archival. Some of these ideas are quite dated, but perhaps were not so when the article was originally published over twenty years ago. The idea of authenticity in archives achieved by

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[49] Spurgeon, "Pictures and History," *Archivaria,* 1983-84, pp. 60-74.
[50] Ibid, pp. 61-62. Here Spurgeon is quoting the National Gallery Act of Canada, circa 1880.
[51] Ibid., p. 62.
[52] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

continual custody is not nearly as important now, especially since post-modern discourse has emphasized that records are not necessarily trustworthy to begin with, or at the very least reflect a personal opinion or truth as understood by the creator. Also much effort has been invested in processes and methods of establishing the authenticity of an artwork when its provenance is problematic. The evidential content of a work is also important, although Spurgeon qualifies such "evidence" as relating to the understanding of our country, yet another vague distinction.[53] What exactly is meant by "understanding our country?" Understanding its physical geography? Its many cultures and traditions? Its political history? Its ideas? Its structures? All or none of the above? He does conclude that subjective works can be important as evidence. He also recognizes that much art falls into both "documentary" and "fine" categories and that mandates often overlap. He correctly notes that "the fact that the two mandates occasionally overlap does not diminish the *raison d'être* of the two collections."[54]

The most interesting section of the article comes when Spurgeon discusses the need to develop a language to document visual resources. His point that the archivist, art historian and curator need to work together is well taken.[55] His discussion of accessibility is also apt: "The problem with making our visual art collections accessible to the public is manifested not only in the documentation about them we choose to keep and retrieve, but also in the interpretive function represented by our exhibitions and publications." Publications serve to introduce the public to the collections, which arouses

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[53] Ibid., p. 70.
[54] Ibid., p. 71.
[55] Ibid., p. 73.

their interest. However, more information needs to be available at the archives as well, as publications are selective in nature and often not present in the reading room.[56]

Jim Burant's article, "The Military Artist and the Documentary Art Record,[57] is a very good example of how to contextualize works of documentary art and provide a greater understanding. He focuses on a specific area of documentary art (sketches, prints and drawing produced by military officers, most of whom had received artistic training) and gives the history of the art's creation. Lavishly illustrated, the article also briefly discusses the history of the archives collection of such works and the problems that are associated with it. This is a very informative article that covers most of the necessary aspects of the context a researcher would find useful in understanding this style of art. What is left out is a discussion of the formal aspects of the art and how they can impact the actual rendering of events, something that does not appear to have been covered adequately in any archival source. Styles, techniques, and training shape the record the artist creates and should be taken into account as part of its context.

Burant concludes with a discussion of the problems faced by the documentary art archivist, the misunderstandings of many archivists not trained in the art field, the questions about the validity of these collections posed by many, and comparisons to gallery and museums settings. From his vantage point in 1988, he felt that the most important step, the discussion of these issues, had begun.[58] However, time has shown little subsequent scholarly debate has occurred, with only a very few articles following Burant's example.

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[56] At Library and Archives Canada, the main introduction comes from a card catalogue in the research room, a format that does not lend itself well to presenting the context and content of a work. Researchers are able to search by subject as well as artist, and these employ access points easily understood by the general public.
[57] Jim Burant, "The Military Artist and the Documentary Art Record," *Archivaria,* 1988, pp. 33-51.
[58] Ibid., p. 48.

An interesting look at art and archives can be seen in the article, "Looking at Archives in Art," by Barbara L. Craig and James M. O'Toole.[59] This article does not address the issue of documentary art – it is published in an American journal and archives there do not often have art collections. Instead the authors have look at depictions of archival textual records in art, such as portraits or genre paintings, to understand the role of records and perceptions of them in society at a point in time. Early on, the authors clarify their ideas about art and archives:

> We make no claim to expertise in art or art history. In fact, we have chosen to look at art with the archivist's interest in documentary practises, work-places, and the society's ideas about these things. Portraits and genre paintings have the advantage of being accessible to viewers without the art specialist's knowledge.[60]

Art here is not really seen as a record itself; it is the portrayal of textual records that is the interest. This article provides an important example of how art is regarded in archives beyond Canada and demonstrates the unease many feel in dealing with art. This attitude does not affect everyone and we shall see numerous American researchers have made use of documentary art collections for research.

In 1980 there was a conference at Mount Saint Vincent University on the topic "The Roles of Documentary Art in Understanding a Cultural Heritage."[61] The conference proceedings consist of five papers and an introduction. In the introduction, some comments from the Canadian artist, Alex Colville, who spoke at the conference, are quoted: "…museums and art galleries have a responsibility to provide more text, more

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[59] Craig and. O'Toole, "Looking at Archives in Art," *American Archivist,* 2000, pp. 97-125.
[60] Ibid., p. 98.
[61] *The Roles of Documentary Art in Understanding A Cultural Heritage: Proceedings of a Conference*. Held at the Art Gallery of Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. October 31, 1980.

supplementary information about the things we present to our audiences." The conference proceedings look at ways to do this using archival resources.[62]

The conference papers begin with Hugh Taylor's "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,"[63] which has already been discussed. The other presenters at the event were Jay Canto, Marie Elwood, Michael Bell and Mary Allodi. It is interesting to note that one of this small group of presenters is American, Jay Cantor, whose country does not have a strong tradition of art collections in archival holdings. Cantor's paper, "The New England Landscape of Change,"[64] uses artworks of both "gallery" and "documentary" status to discuss the changing attitudes towards nature in New England from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Marie Elwood's article, "John Elliot Woolford, Draughtsman to His Excellency the 9th Earl of Dalhousie 1816-1821,"[65] studies an artist who would be considered documentary by the traditional definition. He drew his sketches of the landscape on the spot, providing early images of many areas of Canada as he travelled with the Earl of Dalhousie. This essay uses archival textual records to establish the relationship between Woolford and Dalhousie and to examine Woolford's early training. This helps to illustrate how various media of archives can be integrated to provide a fuller context for art records, a topic which has been little explored.

Michel Bell's article, "Why Look at this Stuff?,"[66] explains why he devoted his career to the study of Canadian historical art at a time when it received little attention.

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[62] Ibid., p. iii.
[63] Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," 2003, pp. 417-428.
[64] Jay Cantor, "The New England Landscape of Change," *Roles of Documentary Art in Understanding A Cultural Heritage*. 1980, pp. 15-22.
[65] Marie Elwood, "John Elliot Woolford, Draughtsman to His Excellency the 9th Earl of Dalhousie 1816-1821," Ibid., pp. 23-29.
[66] Michel Bell, "Why Look at this Stuff?", Ibid., pp. 30-43.

(Bell has published numerous books on Canadian art history.) Bell highlights the uses of so called "documentary art" to teach the history of Canada. He sees it as an important factor contributing to Canadian's self knowledge.[67] This is a valid point, and one that likely could stand to be applied more widely. People often relate readily to images, and if they were to become more familiar with art integrated into other historical subjects and archival media, they might lose some of their apprehension.

The final article, "Printmaking in Canada" by Mary Allodi,[68] offers one of the first studies of eighteenth and nineteenth Canadian printmaking. In the Canadian art historical fashion, the study is chronological and regional. This is another article that presents good insights into a specific area of art that is seen as archival and documentary, but is also important from an art historical standpoint.

Aside from Taylor's paper, all of these articles, while informative and interesting, provide examples of the uses of documentary art rather than a discussion of the problematic nature of defining it. The underlying assumption is that documentary art is of a lesser aesthetic quality and often consists of prints, drawings, and watercolours, which could be made immediately on the spot. However, Cantor does discuss the Hudson River School in the United States, which included such artists as Sanford Gifford and Thomas Cole.[69] These artists definitely fall into the "gallery" realm of art. John Elliot Woolford is also included in an early and important art historical survey of Canada,[70] yet again showing that the boundaries between these two areas are very porous.

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[67] Ibid, p. 39.
[68] Mary Allodi, "Printmaking in Canada," Ibid., pp. 44-53.
[69] Jay Canton, "The New England Landscape of Change," Ibid., p. 17.
[70] Harper, *Painting in Canada,* 1966, p. 108.

The most recent scholarly work dealing with documentary art appeared in 2002. Entitled "Visual Archives and the Writing of Canadian History: A Personal Review," and written by Jim Burant.[71] He begins with a description of the most common errors in the use of visual archival records: researchers leave selection of "illustrations" to the last minute, or simply expect the publisher to find appropriate images, rarely using the records as part of their research.[72] Burant addresses all aspects of visual archives, including photography, with some references to cartographic holdings and audio-visual materials.[73] He argues that these materials are important for society's visual literacy, and then looks at the idea of visual literacy in historical study. Much of the discussion relates to the reaction of the general public and scholars to the two television series, *The Valour and the Horror* and *Canada: A People's History,* as well as historical books that rely heavily on images. Visual literacy is seen as more important today than it was twenty or even ten years ago, and requiring a greater use and understanding of archival visual holdings as historical evidence, not mere illustration. He even mentions how developments like RAD (Canada's Rules for Archival Description) have led to providing increased levels of contextual information around an artwork, which makes the descriptions and the art itself more readily available to researchers.[74] This is an informative article, but it does not tackle definitions of what is archival art. That is left as assumed or implicit. It also raises another conundrum – the notion of visual literacy. This is another emerging area of study that includes art as well as all the images that

[71] Jim Burant, "Visual Archives and the Writings of Canadian History: A Personal Review," *Archivaria.* No. 54, Fall 2002, pp. 92-117.
[72] Ibid., pp. 94-95.
[73] Ibid., p. 93.
[74] Ibid., p. 111. A RAD compliant description will have information at the item, file, series and fonds level, linking the art to other works from the collection, possibly of various media. A biography of the creator/donor or an organizational history, as well as a provenance description, are found in the RAD description.

people are bombarded with as they move through their daily life. It seems to be a subject that will challenge the definitions of all aspects of visual culture – art, documentary art, design, and advertising to name a few.[75]

After surveying this small body of the scholarly literature available on documentary art, a fuller picture of what, exactly, it is begins to emerge. While the brief description of documentary art discussed initially still holds -- realistic images of the landscape and people -- a few other themes have become evident. Although documentary art includes portraits, posters, seals, coats of arms, and a variety of other media, the focus of many discussions (including this one) is on more traditional art media such as oils, watercolours, and prints. Within this limitation, the further focus of research is often on military, topographical, and other landscape art in the collections. Picturesque landscapes are the most frequently mentioned types of works and are used quite often to illustrate the author's arguments. The documentary qualities of these works, as well as portraits of historical figures, are obvious, but the other media in the collection are just as valuable and should not be ignored. It is sad to realize that even within the under-appreciated category of documentary art, much of that art is itself not discussed. The focus on topographical art also highlights some of the issues in dealing with this art. This genre is

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[75] An interesting application of visual literacy can be seen in James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong*. New York: The New Press, 1999. This book looks at historic sites across the USA and, as the title indicates, at the lies that are present in plaques, cairns, historic sites and museums. An interesting section in the introduction looks at "Hieratic Scale in Historic Monuments." This explores how people are portrayed in sculpture and how sculpture (and in turn art) can be manipulated to present certain messages. Scale represents importance, so royalty could often be portrayed larger than life. Positions of figures are important signals – how many artworks portray white people towering over those of other races? This is meant as a visual representation of their power, but also their importance as a race, the paternal teacher instructing the "savage." Many people would look at artworks or public sculpture unthinkingly, unaware of the messages they are subconsciously observing and to a degree internalizing. Visual literacy facilitates critical thought about images around us and the ability to be aware of subtle manipulations. Such issues are commonly looked at in art history, but it not often discussed in mainstream publications.

likely most accessible to use as evidence and to "liven the dull history books."[76] People without an art background often seem to feel most comfortable with landscapes. The information in other representational images, let alone in abstract and non representational art, is somewhat harder to access – you have to go beyond the picture, or understand commonly used symbols from its period. The diverse nature of the materials in documentary art collections of archives is difficult to describe and hard to use without some basic understandings. Most people today are not familiar with the meanings and messages portrayed in heraldry, seals, flags, or coins. Instead of looking into making these items more accessible, the easier-to-understand topographical art has become the focus of much of the discussion. Exhibition of these works is also a strong tendency. This in itself is a wonderful use of the images, but it is also important to realize they can be used as regular records for any and all researchers to reveal historical content and context, not just to admire on walls. A person researching the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada might find it useful to look at how the people have been portrayed in art, in addition to government files detailing actions and policies or to personal accounts and letters observing people and events.

Moving beyond the scholarly literature, the public face of documentary art is interesting to explore. Many archives in Canada have significant amounts of visual material in their holdings and how they introduce these collections to the public at large is very revealing. It is quite likely that today many people are first introduced to archives and their collections on the Internet rather than by visiting the reading room. Archives then must strive to create interesting and engaging sites that hold a user's interest while

[76]Spurgeon, "Pictures and History," *Archivaria,* 1983-84, pp. 62-63.

providing general information about the nature of archives and ways for users to access specific information about the records. This is no small feat, but one that can be accomplished through proper planning and good website design. The nature of websites, however, is that of a constantly changing media, that must grab a users' attention quickly before they move to the next page. This is a challenge many are exploring, Library and Archives Canada included:

> The website for the Library and Archives of Canada does provide access to a wide range of individual documents, and the inventory is growing steadily. As of December 2005, the website advertised, Library and Archives Canada has acquired through bequests, and planned acquisition, over 350,000 works of art relating mostly to Canada. This search tool allows you to consult almost 175,000 entries that correspond to a lesser number of works of art, given that some works have more than one description. About 10,000 digitized images of artworks are in the public domain and may be consulted on-line. This number (revised September 2005) will gradually increase.[77]

The website begins with many options: there are virtual on-line exhibitions, pages for publishers, archivists, librarians, teachers and children, a list of publications, and so on. There is also a search engine for the library collection and one for the archives holdings, which is called ArchiviaNet. This searchable database first takes you to a table of contents in which you are able to pick a topic to narrow your search, ranging from the diary of Mackenzie King, General Inventory, Aboriginal records, or Documentary Art. When using the documentary art database, searches can be limited to images that have been digitized, to exclude caricatures or to be limited only to caricatures, to cover only certain ranges of items, and so on. These features make it especially easy to find images for use as illustrations. Item-level descriptions are brief but useful and RAD compliant.

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[77] "Introduction page," *ArchiviaNet*, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/020116_e.html, December 16, 2005. It is especially useful for the archives to be up front about what is on-line compared to their entire holdings, as these numbers can change rapidly and many users do seem to assume (incorrectly) that the entire collection is digitized and available.

It is also possible to see higher-level descriptions of series or overall fonds or collections, which are brief but useful for the context they provide about artists, donors, provenance and restrictions.

Over the years, LAC has posted numerous exhibitions that showcase the collection. Exhibitions change over time, and new ones are created. A good introductory exhibit, entitled *Living Memory,*[78] provides a glimpse into the wide variety of records regarding Canada's history available at the archives. You may search the site by time period, subject, or media. Photographs and documentary art are treated as separate media and have separate sites. The documentary art site features portraits, seals, landscapes, commercial designs, and architectural plans ranging in dates from 1534 to 1991. Each individual item has a short description of the object, which is often entirely focused on the artist's career and the content of the piece. This glimpse into the collection likely encourages many to explore the holdings, but it does not address the purpose of documentary art in archives or provide a lot of contextual information. It is informative to note that in the photography component of the site, it is stated that photographs reveal information about the creating culture as well as the information provided by the content, but the same is not acknowledged on the art site.[79] Artists *might* strive for realism and accuracy in their works, but their training, skill, and the media will always affect the finished image, as will current ideals in art. In 2004 many more exhibitions were posted on-line. In general, these sites are beautifully laid out with an abundance of information, presented like a virtual museum or art gallery. This is a format that people are used to,

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[78] "About the Exhibition" *Living Memory*. http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0509/050901_e March 31, 2003, April 5, 2003, and February 20, 2006.
[79] Ibid. The photographic page, with the quoted information was found at http://www.collectionscanada.ca/05/0509/050915/05091500_e.html , February 20, 2006.

but it does not highlight all of the rich contextual material that can surround each individual object. An exhibition usually highlights one particular aspect of a work, and it is the exhibition as a whole that is used to tell a story; each item's story is not seen.

A prominent exhibition in 2005 was *A Collectors Passion: The Peter Winkworth Collection*. This major donation of art spanning four centuries was an important acquisition for LAC. The collection is comprised of 700 watercolours, 3,300 prints, and nine paintings.[80] This site highlights this collection, with an emphasis on young Canadians in sections entitled "For Students" and "Art Venture: A Collector's Challenge." Again, like many other exhibitions on the website, it is a virtual gallery, with images and information provided as you navigate through the pages.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States does not have the total archives tradition that Canada does and does not actively collect documentary art. As of 2002, however, its website did have an exhibit that dealt with art. NARA obviously recognizes that visual media is often useful in attracting attention. The exhibition, *A New Deal for the Arts*,[81] showcases the variety of items produced by artists under the "New Deal"' programs which were designed to help Americans get work during the Depression. This site features posters, photographs, paintings, and murals produced by people working for the government in the 1930s. It is divided by theme: Rediscovering America, Celebrating the People, Work Pays America, Activist Arts (art to promote social change), and Useful Art (such as posters). The site is based on an exhibit at NARA in 1997 and 1998. While this exhibition does provide an interesting glimpse

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[80] "Introduction,"*A Collector's Passion: The Peter Winkworth Collection*. LAC on-line exhibition, www.collectionscanada.ca/art/050602_e.html, December 16, 2005.
[81] "A New Deal For the Arts" *The United States National Archives and Records Administration* http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/new_deal_for_the_arts/index.html, March 31, 2003.

into American documentary art, it quickly becomes evident that it is not the norm. In the general website index, there was no reference to art or documentary art. The entry for "Art Provenance" directed the user to look under "Holocaust Era Assets."[82] The New Deal art is unique in the United States, as the artists were hired by the government. All material they created in the program was government property and as such, ended up in the archives.

Australia's National Archives (NAA) site has no reference to art, perhaps because like the United Sates, total archives is not practised there; only government records are acquired by NAA. While the NAA site does allow users to do searches for photographs as well as records on-line, its exhibits were comprised entirely of textual records. The collection does include posters, maps, architectural drawings, films, play scripts, musical scores, and sound recordings.[83] This seems a more selective archives concept, one that focuses on materials that may not have had a repository specifically geared towards them such as galleries or museums. From a Canadian perspective it seems confusing that they would collect some "art" records such as those pertaining to music, theatre, and film, but not others, such as "documentary" art.

Until recently at the website for the Archives of Manitoba, there was little reference at all to the documentary art collection that it houses. The Hudson's Bay Archives section listed still images and documentary art under its holdings, including prints, drawings, paintings, posters, calendars, and advertising art as documentary art.[84] However, when the new searchable database at the Archives of Manitoba, called

[82] General search of *The United States National Archives and Records Administration* site, www.archives.gov/ , March 31, 2003.
[83] Search of *National Archives of Australia* site, www.naa.gov.au/ March 31, 2003.
[84] Search of the *Archives of Manitoba* site, www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/ and the *Hudson's Bay Company Archives* pages www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/ on March 31, 2003.

"Keystone" went live in December 2005, documentary art was better described. While the entire collection of the archives has yet to be described in the new database, much has been included and is now available to on-line researchers. This is a very sophisticated program that allows one to search by creator, subject, and item. All descriptions are RAD compliant, with a large amount of contextual detail. In addition to fonds, series, and item descriptions, there are detailed descriptions of creators which are linked to show evolution through time. Through this database some of the artwork held at the archives can now be seen on-line. Searching by media and keyword is possible to gain access to art at an item or fonds level.[85] Again, however, there is no on-line description of the nature of archival art, or to the archives' own collection as an entity. It is completely integrated into other descriptions, a factor which no doubt ensures it is seen as integral to the archives as a whole, but does not help to explain the collecting mandate or the distinctions of this collection compared to that of a gallery.

Numerous other archives, such as the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, also have on-line exhibits that feature their visual material, but they do not discuss its nature in-depth on the site.[86] Despite the total archives concept, many archives, including the Archives of Manitoba and the University of Manitoba, have histories of separating the various media into separate series within the fonds. Re-description is proceeding, to correct this situation, but it is a slow process and so many

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[85] "Keystone Database," *Archives of Manitoba*, www.gov.mbca/chc/archives/keystone/index.html, December 16, 2005.

[86] Search of the *University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections* site, www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/ and Canadian Archival Information Network, www.cain-rcia.ca/cain/e_home.html, March 3, 2003. Many virtual exhibits are to be found organized by province on what was previously known as the Canadian Archival Information Network and know as Archives Canada. The website can now be found at www.archivescanada.ca/index2.html, March 1, 2006.

visual media seem to languish almost as an afterthought to in-depth description of records in finding aids.

These on-line exhibits indicate that archives highlight their documentary art collection in public programming and outreach. This, on its own, is a wonderful use of the records, one that likely grabs the interest of many people using these sites. Certainly an exhibit of turn-of-the-century photographs and even objects such as medals is somewhat more accessible to the casual visitor than a diary or file of correspondence that must be read to be understood. It is also true that a cursory glance at many of these records does not do justice to the rich information contained in them. Snippets of interesting information are given about individual records in exhibitions, but these only paint a part of the picture. Even if one was researching a specific painting, there is often no information on file that could not be found in an art historical text. Exhibitions certainly have an important function, but to relegate many visual records to this category does seem to ignore many other important aspects or uses of the work.

To disseminate information more widely, Library and Archives Canada has also published numerous booklets, pamphlets and catalogues on their collections, making them widely available across Canada. The then Public Archives of Canada put out a *General Guide* series to its collections. In 1983 two general guides were published on visual material, the *Picture Division* and the *National Photography Collection.*[87] After another reshuffle of the departments, these guides were followed in 1992 with the *Documentary Art and Photography Division* guide. These handy guides are divided into

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[87] Vézina, *General Guide Series: Picture Division*, 1983, and Christopher Seifried, *General Guide Series: National Photgraphy Collection*. Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1983. The names of these publications are slightly revealing. The bland and somewhat all encompassing Picture Division, versus the collection worthy of national status.

three sections: the Introduction and Historical Profile, Services of the Departments and Description of their Holdings. They provide not only information on how the archives works - how it processes and circulates its holdings (something lacking on-line), but also a description of the holdings. In 1992, the Documentary Art section of the division contained 250,000 items. The range of items is impressive:

> original works of art on paper, canvas, and other supports, and in all media. It included paintings, watercolours, drawings, miniatures, and silhouettes; original and reproduction prints, posters, postcards, greeting cards, photoprocess prints and other types of printed objects; metallic, stone, wooden and plastic objects not normally acquired by other institutions, such as medals political buttons, seals, heraldic devices, and coats of arms; and related printed material, including illustrated books, broadsides with pictorial inserts, and publicity material.[88]

This collection is so diverse that it almost falls under the medieval idea of art! It certainly diverges from the current predominant understanding of art in the “fine” art context. It also describes genre types, many of which an art gallery would collect – but does little to describe what makes these important from historical, archival or evidential viewpoints, or different from their gallery counterparts.

The guide then moves through each of the media, providing a brief description of what they are, the number of such items in the collection and brief references to some of the more stunning collections and pieces. All in all, the guide is a very good introduction to the contents of documentary art and the archival processes that acquire, preserve, and make them available, which are aspects of archival collecting not seen on-line. The guides contain a broad idea of what documentary art is, but again they tend to focus on the content of the collections over their context.

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[88] Burant, *General Guide Series: Documentary Art and Photography Division*, 1992, p. 13.

Archives have also published catalogues, often highlighting certain aspects of their collection. Library and Archives Canada is again foremost in producing these works. Three of these notable publications are general in nature, *Treasures of the National Archives of Canada,*[89] *Archives: Mirror of Canada Past,*[90] and the previously mentioned *A Place in History: Twenty Years of Acquiring Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the National Archives of Canada.*[91] They provide an overview of the entire range of the collection of the National Archives. *Treasures of the National Archives* states that the images reproduced in the publication were selected for their importance as evidence and for their impact and role in Canadian history. It also highlights the fact that these records are a tangible link to the past. Portraits, landscapes, and cityscapes are included in the publication. It is interesting to note that many of the featured portraits also figure in art historical study, such as the portrait of the founder of the Ursuline Order of Canada.[92] Artists such as Robert Hood and William Hind, who are featured in the collection, are also prominent figures in the Canadian art historical canon. *A Place In History* provides another introduction to the collection. The foreword, written by Jim Burant, not only discusses the exhibition featured, but the history of the art collection at the archives.[93] It is then divided into thematic sections, "As long as the sun shall shine," "Artists in a New Land," "Timeless Mementos," and "Our Times: Art as Record in the 20th Century."[94] Artworks are presented by artist with in-depth discussions of the works as well as artist biographies. These publications provide, like the Internet sites, a glimpse

[89] National Archives of Canada, *Treasures of the National Archives of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
[90] Public Archives of Canada, *Archives: Mirror of Canada Past.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.
[91] Burant et al., *A Place in History.* 1991.
[92] National Archives of Canada, *Treasures of the National Archives of Canada*, 1992, pp. 72-75.
[93] Burant, *A Place in History*, 1991, pp. vii-viii.
[94] Ibid., Table of Contents.

into the diversity of the collection. They are on a par with the goal of most gallery catalogues – to present important research and to provide for a permanent tangible memento of an exhibition. Another type of publication is one that examines a specific collection. An example of this can be found in the book *W.H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana: Painting, Water-Colours and Drawings*.[95] This particular catalogue outlines the provenance of the collection, and then describes the individual works, focusing on information such as artists biographies. There are also thematic exhibitions, as seen in *Arctic Images: Pictorial Witnesses, 1819-1854*[96] and *Arctic Images: The Frontier Photographed, 1860-1911.*[97] These books explore various depictions of the Canadian arctic primarily by explorers. In this instance, not much information is provided. Title, artist, inscriptions present on the artwork, and negative numbers are listed for all works in the exhibition, and selected works are reproduced in black and white.

In addition to these general archival books, publications such as *The Painted Past*[98] focus on the artworks present in the collection of Library and Archives Canada. This publication presents 40 paintings from the collection along with detailed catalogue entries. These descriptions are far more thorough than those generally available on the web and serve to contextualize the artworks to a much greater degree. Portraits, landscapes, and images of native life are the main focus of this exhibition. In addition to the information on the artist and the content of the pieces, more contextual information is presented about the individual images, such as information about the process of sitting for

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[95] Martha E. Cooke, *W.H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana: Paintings, Water-colours and Drawings (Manoir Richelieu Collection)*, Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1983.
[96] Public Archives of Canada, *Arctic Images: Pictorial Witnesses, 1819-1854*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1977.
[97] Public Archives of Canada, *Arctic Images: The Frontier Photographed, 1860-1911*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1977.
[98] Sylvia A. Antoniou et al., *The Painted Past*. Public Archives of Canada, exhibition catalogue. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1984.

a portrait or sculpture, or even anecdotes as can be seen in the entry for a photograph of Sir John A. Macdonald.[99] The introduction to this catalogue provides a very interesting definition of documentary art – it states that it is art that is *collected* for the importance of its subject matter.[100] With the use of collected instead of valued, the interpretation of this medium drastically changes. The work is collected because of its evidential qualities; it does not necessarily indicate that these are the only or even most important qualities. This small change serves to add a layer of solidity to an otherwise vague definition.

While much discussion of documentary art does seem to focus on historical works, it is important to note that work with "historical evidential" qualities is still being produced. On Library and Archives Canada's site, as noted previously, works up until 1991 are seen in exhibitions. An interesting publication that shows the more modern aspects of documentary art is found in the book, *The Art of Interpretation: an exhibition of artworks commissioned by Parks Canada, Atlantic region*.[101] These works were created by artists in the 1970s and 1980s to aid Parks Canada in their interpretative activities.[102] There are modern recreations of historic places and events,[103] the way of life of past inhabitants,[104] and works that help in the interpretation of the natural

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[99] Ibid, pp. 49-51. Anecdotes in *The Painted Past* include one from his sister in which she called Sir John A. the ugliest man in Canada. After comparing this source to Canadian art history sources, they are on par with each other. Much Canadian art history has focused on artist's biographies, content of works and broad stylistic trends. It is important to note that in the references used in writing these descriptions, art historical works appear frequently, although not as often as historical and archival resources.
[100] Ibid., p. 1.
[101] Public Archives of Nova Scotia, *The Art of Interpretation: an exhibition of artworks commissioned by Parks Canada, Atlantic region*. Exhibition at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, November 29, 1985 to February 28, 1986.
[102] Ibid, p. 1.
[103] Ibid. see Lewis Parker, (cat. No 1-10, pp. 4-7) including *Louisbourg, View from a Warship, 1744* (Acrylic on canvas 162.2 x 314.9, 1981-82), and *Expulsion of the Acadians, Ile Saint-Jean, 1758*,(mixed media painting, 76.5 x 102, 1979).
[104] Ibid. see *French Greenfishing Ships, c. 1650* (Dusan Kadlec, cat. No. 18, p. 9, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 86.4, 1984).

environment.[105] While modern images interpreting historical subjects are not "authentic" history to many, these artworks do document the interpretation function of a government agency and, as such, are archival records offering evidence of that function. Parks Canada acknowledges the great value of these visual records because they could direct the action, choose the medium and the artist.[106] Arthur Doughty also established the precedent for collecting re-creations in the archives at the beginning of the century. In his tradition the government sent a war artist to the Gulf War to document the troops, and official portraits of the Prime Minister, Governor General, ministers, and even major bureaucrats are still commissioned and all still fall under archival jurisdiction.

To this point, this thesis has focused on materials available to the researcher who is interested in this topic. Archival journals and government publications are present in libraries across the country. An understanding, vaguely written but widely accepted, appears to have emerged concerning the nature of documentary art: that it is realistic in its depiction, focuses on people, places, events and activities and is frequently made by the amateur artist. There is an understanding that it was not meant to be art that is primarily valued for its artistic merit, but rather for its evidential and representational qualities. Although this emerging definition has also been qualified by some as including only art that is collected for having these qualities, this still acknowledges that it may still indeed possess others as well.[107] What remains is to now look at current practice in the field of archival art and gallery art to see whether these ideas hold true. Theory is undoubtedly important in the study of any field, but how, whether and why it is put into practice is important as well.

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[105] Ibid. see Roger Gaudet's *Whirligig Beetle*, (cat. No. 37, p. 18, pencil on paper, 35 x 42.5, 1983).
[106] Ibid., p. 2.
[107] Antoniou, *The Painted Past,* 1984, p. 1.

Chapter 4

Practical Definitions: Interviews and Collection Highlights

In 1934 C.W. Jefferys wrote "Every sincere picture, in addition to whatever art quality it may possess, has value as a record, a value not subject to the fluctuating standard of taste, or the caprice of fashion in art criticism."[1] This observation neatly sums up many of the ideas discussed so far: the notion of art and its functions, especially art as a record, changing tastes and how they impact collection of art by galleries, and the widely held interest in documenting Canadian history through art and how this interest in depictions of history led to the collection of art by archives in Canada

Theoretically, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there is a pattern of definitions by which art is considered archival and therefore should be collected by archives. However, articles discussing the subject do not state that definition in a clear or succinct form. They are more likely to talk around the definition, assume that what qualifies as archival is already understood by the reader and then focus on a specific example for discussion, such as military topography. There are no real arguments

[1] Robert Stacey. *C.W. Jefferys*. Canadian Artist Series. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1985, p. 26.

advanced as to why this particular artwork is considered to be archival in the literature. Evidential and historical qualities are cited. According to much of the literature, documentary or archival quality art is primarily landscape or figural art documenting, in a realistic fashion, Canadian people, places and activities. There is an emphasis on certain techniques, such as watercolours, drawings, and sketches, which could later be made up into prints, due to the idea that these media are seen as ones that allowed the artist to produce more truthful renderings of the subject.[2] The idea of creation on location versus later in the artists' studio is important in this regard. The assumption that certain art forms are thus more truthful and accurate renditions of the past, and thus more "documentary," seems to be the assumption in the literature, without any critical discussion about why. It is evident that many, including Jefferys, who expressed this point long before post-modern theory emerged, would argue that all art has some historical value. So again, what exactly is documentary art? The existing understated definition continues to leave lingering questions. Is it useful in the archival or gallery workplace? Do practising archivists agree with these ideas? Does this definition encompass all works held as documentary evidence in archival collections? What about art gallery curators, as related art professionals? An important aspect of their job is to select and justify the artworks collected by their institutions. Do they agree with the theoretical definition of documentary art, or are they even aware of it? Do they feel that they are competing with archives for important works? Do their collections hold works

[2] Watercolours and sketches have a tradition of being worked up outside on location, while oil paintings were frequently composed in the studio from multiple sketches. This is a general trend, although in the early nineteenth century, the Barbizon school in Paris had of artists who did their finished oil paintings in the natural landscape. When looking at art in these media, it is important to remember that just because it is easier to work in pencil, charcoal or watercolour outside, does not ensure that the artist's rendering is any more factual or content accurate.

that can be or should be considered documentary art? If so, in which kind of institution does such work best belong?

To answer these questions it is useful to interview professionals working in these two fields, archivists and curators, and to look at the collections themselves that they and their predecessors have amassed. In doing so, it can be assessed whether most or many works actually fall under, or perhaps even help contribute to, this definition. Institutional mandates and whether they mesh with this idea, as well as any exceptions, can be explored. How exceptions to the general trends entered the collection of archives can be discussed. This comparison of archives and galleries in this sometimes contentious area may help sharpen our understanding of the nature and role of art in archives.

As it is impossible to cover all archives across the country for a project of this size, the methodology chosen here is to look at a selection of national, provincial, and regional institutions in order to provide an overall reflection of the issues discussed in this thesis. Library and Archives Canada and the National Gallery of Canada, both located in Ottawa, are important national cultural institutions to be included. The Canadian War Museum, which contains a unique collection of visual art materials pertaining to Canada's war history, is also in Ottawa. Manitoba is fortunate to have both a provincial art gallery and provincial archives, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Archives of Manitoba. Both are located in Winnipeg. Winnipeg is home to a host of smaller archives and galleries as well. The Centre du Patrimoine, in Saint Boniface, stands out as an ideal regional archives to consider in a discussion of documentary art, as it actively acquires art in its mandate.

Library and Archives Canada, as Canada's national archival institution, helps set and promote the standards followed by many smaller archives across the country. The mandate of LAC in respect to visual materials is to acquire and preserve art and photography records of enduring historical and documentary value to all Canadians and to facilitate scholarly and popular research into Canadian history through the wide-ranging collection.[3] This mandate for visual media does not differ in any way from the official mandate of Library and Archives Canada in respect to all archival media. As previously discussed, definitions of documentary art are widely available in published format in the 1992 and 1983 General Guide series. The 1992 edition of *Documentary Art and Photography Division* acknowledges that "a broad definition of documentary art is essential in order to respond to the requirements of changing historical trends."[4] So documentary art includes watercolours, drawings, miniatures, oil paintings, silhouettes, caricatures and comics, coats of arms, flags, seals, medals, prints, cards, and posters.[5] The 1983 edition of this series divided documentary art into two sections, traditional and environmental.[6] Traditional documentary art consists of watercolours, oil paintings, prints, coats of arms, flags, seals, costumes, miniatures, and silhouettes.[7] Environmental documentary art is used to describe works created explicitly to carry a message, such as posters, buttons, cartoons, comics, caricatures, humorous drawings, and cards.[8] Of course, there is some overlap here, for a painting or coat of arms also conveys a message, often intentionally from the point of creation. Since a "broad definition" of documentary

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[3] Jim Burant, *General Guide Series: Documentary and Photography Division*. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1992, p. 1.
[4] Ibid., p. 13.
[5] Ibid., pp. 13-23.
[6] Raymond Vézina, *General Guide Series: Picture Division*. Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1983, p. 9.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., pp. 26-32.

art is necessary, why does this broadness only extend to various visual media types and not modes of representation or depiction in art? Discussions and definitions of specific media are not the most useful ways to define a genre of art – Impressionist art is not defined on the basis of being done in oils -- so a predisposition towards sketches and watercolours should not by itself define documentary art. Besides, virtually every major art gallery would also acquire landscapes, portraits, watercolours, and so on, so the definition in this regard is meaningless. It gives the what, but not the why.

The Visual Heritage Division of LAC now holds the documentary art collection of its variously named predecessors. Its current head is Jim Burant, who, as we have seen, has frequently published articles on aspects of documentary art and is a major scholar in this area of research. An articulate writer and speaker and intimately familiar with the LAC collection after working with it for all of his career of nearly thirty years, Burant is a wealth of information on the topics of documentary art and LAC's policies, projects, and collection. Burant's personal view is that while all art does have documentary qualities, from an archival perspective, visual documentary context is one of the most important features.[9] This is an important qualification and one that helps narrow the archival definition into something that is easier to work with and understand. It acknowledges that documentary qualities are seen in all art, including abstract, and non-representational, but it also imposes a firmer limit on the definition of which art is archival. This is an interesting distinction and one that is somewhat distinct from the previously seen limitation of art that is collected for its documentary qualities.[10] All art

[9] Interview with Jim Burant, Archivist, Visual Heritage Division, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa October 19, 2004.
[10] Sylvia A. Antoniou et al., *The Painted Past*. Public Archives of Canada, exhibition catalogue. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1984. p. 1.

documents something, whether it is a period or emotion or feeling in the creator's life, a philosophical idea, a prevailing style or an event. Archival collections have been somewhat selective in their application of the word "documentary," usually meaning exactly what Burant says, the visual documentary context -- the subject and action depicted in the image -- is what is valued from an archival perspective. This qualifies what is collected, but still not why these qualities are preferred. Once again, it is important to note that most people without an art background feel most comfortable with images they can relate to, such as realistic depictions of life and land.

While the idea that the visual documentary aspect of an artwork is the most important archival consideration, this -- as in all decisions regarding art -- is a subjective qualification. Just because an archivist considers the visual evidential aspect of a work to be its most important aspect does not mean that someone working from another viewpoint agrees. Many artworks in gallery collections that are prized for their artistic merit are also highly useful and accurate in depicting aspects of historical life in Canada. It is also important to remember that paintings (and photographs) are not always literal truth. The context of creation is important in understanding any art work. Artists change things for compositional, emotional, or even political or patron-influenced reasons. Thus, any image is not the unbiased truth.[11]

Jennifer Devine, another experienced art archivist at Library and Archives Canada, was also able to spend some time discussing these ideas. When it comes to the idea of documentary art, Devine's personal idea is that it needs to reflect Canada - its

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[11] Joan Schwartz, "'Records of Simple Truth and Precision': Photography, Archives and the Illusion of Control," *Archivaria.* No. 50, Fall 2000, pp. 1-40. In this article, Schwartz traces the history of photography, specifically in regard to ideas about the truthfulness of the image. From its beginnings in the early nineteenth century in France, through to the early twentieth century, many people were convinced of the truthfulness of photographic images as exact mirrors of reality. Schwartz places these ideas in context with archival theory and post-modern ideas.

perspective, personality, and history.[12] Culture is an integral part of history and one of the defining aspects of a nation. As such, art and artists have a huge role to play in maintaining a broad record of Canada's history. However, this definition is also not very concise – it is hard to argue that the art of Les Automatistes[13] in Quebec or the Group of Seven in Algonquin Park, or L.L. FitzGerald in Manitoba, are not an important part of Canadian culture. Les Automatistes, as one of the earliest groups of non-representational painters in Canada, are immensely important to Canadian art history, but it would likely be difficult to find their work in an archival collection! The Group of Seven and L.L. Fitzgerald did create many landscapes, but not in a realistic fashion, yet their work is also strongly identified as central to Canadian culture and history. In discussion, it seemed as if Devine was leaning toward the same ideas as Burant – that visual evidential aspects are of primary importance from an archival perspective, but the idea of culture does muddy the waters, as it itself can only be defined subjectively. A life-like painting that shows people engaging in a popular Canadian pastime like hockey or curling is no more important to our culture than a less realistic and more symbolic work like Tom Thomson's *Jack Pine,* a work probably known to most Canadians. This work is still seen as typifying the Canadian landscape despite the fact that geographically our nation is much more diverse than Thomson's beloved Algonquin Park. The work also has much in the way of evidential qualities – prior to logging, the jack pine was a marginal species in the forests Thomson painted, but clear cuts gave it the space it needed

[12]Interview with Jennifer Devine, Archivist, Visual Heritage Division, Library and Archives Canada, October 19, 2004.
[13] As notes earlier, Les Automatistes included such figures as Jean-Paul Riopelle and Paul-Emile Borduas, canonical figures in Canadian art history.

to spread.[14] So in reflecting Canadian culture what is meant: images of Canadian past times, or images that become a part of or reflect Canadian identity? This qualification, while initially helpful, ends up posing yet more questions.

In addition to art, fonds of artists are collected at LAC, both actively and passively.[15] While artists' fonds often consist primarily of textual documents (letters, memos, accounts), sketchbooks can be included, and early, unfinished or unsold artworks. The preservation of an artist's personal papers allows for in-depth, broad-based research on many aspects of an artist's work, career and his or her interactions with and influences on or by other artists. Textual records are often arranged into series and are linked intellectually to any art objects or photographs by finding aids, allowing researchers to immediately see the scope and variety of a total, multi-media fonds. From an art historical perspective, an artist's personal papers are quite important. They can be helpful in proving influences, establishing dates, or simply providing more contextual information about their careers and their works. Early works that have not been exhibited, or sometimes even survived (as documented in such textual records), can provide evidence that artists were experimenting in other genres, or dealing with new theories and also gradually establishing a personal style. These types of records are invaluable in many other types of research as well, although it is in the context of their visual artistic works they often prove most helpful.

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[14] Charles C. Hill, *Tom Thomson*. Exhibition Catalogue, Art Gallery of Ontario and National Gallery of Canada, 2002, p. 32.
[15]Interview with Jim Burant, October 19, 2004. LAC has developed a listing of prominent twentieth-century artists whose papers are of archival interest. Some artists' papers are already located at various archives around the country; other artists may be approached in the interest of donating their textual documents.

In discussion with Jennifer Devine, the idea of the study collection (as artists' fonds are often referred to) frequently came up.[16] Study collections have often been held by galleries as well as by archives.[17] LAC has such study collections on artists such as Harold Town, A.Y. Jackson and Naomi Groves. Devine personally feels that archives excel at study collections.[18] This is unsurprising as it reflects the focus of the Canadian total archives concept, collecting all aspects of a creator's records and generally not separating them by media, but describing them as a whole. Archives have experience working within this theory, and with relating various media to their creator or context of creation, but it is not a practice that has been adopted by art galleries in describing their artworks. Art galleries that hold study collections tend to have internal archives which hold the collections and describe them. Art galleries also maintain collections files on individual artworks for research and exhibition purposes, but these files vary greatly in content. They can contain anything from photographs of the work, to letters concerning the work, appraisals, and exhibition histories.[19] These are all useful items, but unlike in archives, there is no national standard as to what materials are used in these files or how they are to be described, so a researcher could strike gold when using them for research or be sadly disappointed to find them relatively barren.

In terms of active acquisition, after much research, debate and discussion, the Visual Heritage Section at LAC is actively looking into about 200 prominent Canadian artists. In the interest of documenting Canadian art history, these are artists who already have an established career and have had an impact on the Canadian and international art

[16] Interview with Jennifer Devine, October 19, 2004.
[17] For example, Gallery 1.1.1. of the School of Art, University of Manitoba, holds the study collection of L.L Fitzgerald.
[18] Interview with Jennifer Devine, October 19, 2004.
[19] Many art galleries also maintain collection databases, but again materials contained within them vary by gallery, as does the number of images digitized or described in the database compared to paper files.

scenes. Other criteria included artists who have worked for or have been commissioned by the government to produce "official" art to document federal activity, and those who exercise leadership roles in the artistic community by sitting on institutional boards, award juries, funding bodies, and so on. The list was first amassed by art archivists in a group brainstorming session, listing artists whose historical contribution to Canadian art history and development was already firmly in place, the fairly established "canon" of Canadian historical art. This remained a major selection criterion. Other factors that influenced editing the list was whether an artist had represented Canada abroad or been commissioned by federal organizations. As archival mandates look to historically relevant art, young, new, contemporary artists are not included. While galleries try to make history by promoting artists and their oeuvres, archives tend to wait for history to decide which artists remain relevant for future generations before collecting their materials.[20]

As a national archival institution, Library and Archives Canada has an extensive collection of documentary art. Through purchase, legally required transfers of government records, and private donations, the collection has grown over the past century. It includes works by prominent Canadian professional artists, amateurs, and internationally renowned artists. Though this collection was not amassed for artistic merit due to changes in tastes and artistic values, some of what was collected for

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[20] Interview with Jim Burant, October 19, 2004. Mr. Burant also provided an internal working document that outlined the criteria and listed the selected artists. The document was the finished product of these LAC discussions of which artists fit the selected criteria. Names include such figures as Marcel Barbeau, Ron Bolt, Yousuf Karsh, William Kurelek and Daphne Odjig. The last criteria involved in selection, "exercising a leadership role in artistic and academic communities," is very important in the development of Canadian art. Many artists make their day-to-day living by teaching, and can go on to have a great impact on their students. Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven is still renowned for his work in the field of art education, and many other artists such as L.L. FitzGerald, Jock Macdonald or F.H. Varley had significant impacts on the development and growth of Canadian art not only through their work, but also through their teaching.

historical, evidential reasons is now highly valued for artistic reasons. A few simple examples demonstrate this. Until fairly recently, art by women was seen as the work of amateurs and not highly regarded or collected by most major art institutions and galleries. Attitudes towards women in artistic circles have changed drastically in recent decades with the growth in interest in feminism in art in the 1970s. Part of this movement has also focused on looking into history to rediscover women artists. As archival collections were more focused on the subject of a painting, not of the artist, many collections contain works by women artists who are growing in prominence in the Canadian art historical canon, works that Canadian art galleries overlooked early on or actively rejected.

A prime example of this is seen in the works of Mary Riter Hamilton, (1873-1954).[21] She was an accomplished artist who travelled overseas to France to train, something many Canadian artists were unable to do. She received many accolades for her art during her lifetime, but this did not translate into sales. In 1919 she returned to Europe on a commission, where she painted scenes of battle-ravaged France immediately after the war.[22] She painted over 300 paintings of the battlefield zones before they were cleaned up, buildings restored, and trees and fields replanted.[23] These paintings were exhibited many times upon her return to much acclaim, but she faded from public sight and died destitute in 1954. Unable to sell many of her works, at least to appropriate buyers in her eyes, she donated the works to the then Public Archives of Canada.[24] These

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[21] Mary Riter Hamilton, Library and Archives Canada, Artists File 705-40.
[22] Hamilton had tried to enlist as an official war artist, but was refused.
[23] Angela E. Davis and Sarah M. McKinnon, organizers. *No Man's Land: The Battlefield Paintings of Mary Riter Hamilton*. University of Winnipeg exhibition catalogue, November 5-December 8, 1989, p. 13.
[24] Mary Riter Hamilton, Library and Archives Canada Artists File 705-40. The San Francisco Art Gallery offered money for the works; however, there had not been much interest in Canada. Hamilton considered her work of important historical value to the country and did not want it to leave Canada.

works, while undoubtedly "documentary" in their subject matter, are also now seen as works of accomplished art and a source for women's history as well.

The same is true for much other art as well. It was not until 1954 with the purchase of some Thomas Davies watercolours that the National Gallery of Canada began to focus on collecting historical Canadian art.[25] Previously much of it had been dismissed as second rate; it was not seen as distinctive as it was often done in the European style and its practitioners were viewed as inferior to European artists from the "art" perspective of technique and style. The few Canadian artists who had trained abroad were widely celebrated and had stellar reputations during their lives, such as Paul Peel. During the 1950s and especially the 1960s, a change occurred in the study of Canadian art history and what earlier had been seen as inferior was then widely embraced. This change affected works by artists such as Hamilton and Krieghoff.

Donors also provide interesting collecting opportunities. Some donors are highly cultivated and accomplished in the art world, such as Peter Winkworth, who recently donated his extensive private collection to Library and Archives Canada. The Winkworth collection is an extremely important and extensive collection of Canadian art, and a major LAC acquisition of the first rank. Individuals can also approach an institution with single or multiple works, enhancing the collection in diverse ways, adding unique works that would otherwise remain unknown. Many of these unknown treasures can be filled with important historical information and serve to enhance or confuse a collection's acquisition mandate. Donors' wishes must be respected, in terms

[25] Interview with Rosemary Tovell, Curator of Canadian Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Canada, October 18, 2004. Some Canadian art was undoubtedly part of the collection prior to this, but it consisted primarily of finished oil paintings. Previous directors, such as Eric Brown, had also focused much attention on then current artists, such as the Group of Seven.

of keeping the collection together, even if certain aspects of a donation might be more appropriately housed elsewhere.

Most artworks at LAC do seem to fall under the media limitations for documentary art, most of the collection adheres to the importance of landscape views, portraits, and scenes depicting dress, buildings, or daily activities. Many artists found in the collection are also prominent in the current Canadian art historical canon, but this was not necessarily the case at the time of their acquisition. There are, of course, some very interesting and intriguing works, many of which could easily be argued to be of high artistic merit and many would see this artistic merit as more important than the historical evidential aspects of the work.

An interesting example of the occasional deviation in the collection of LAC can be seen in the works by renowned artist, Angelica Kaufmann. Born in Switzerland, Kaufmann made her artistic mark in England and Italy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the founders of the Royal Academy of Art in England, she was one of the very few women in the Academy prior to the twentieth century. Kaufmann is mentioned in most surveys of Western art history, and is known for her portraits and history paintings. The paintings in question, *Woman in Eskimo Clothing from Labrador*[26] and *Man in Eskimo Clothing,*[27] are very informative images. Believed to have been painted during her stay in London between 1768 and 1772, these are earlier works and represent a unique subject in her oeuvre, but not for the time period. Explorers sometimes brought back inhabitants from distant areas as proof of their journey.

[26] Angelica Kaufmann, *Woman In Eskimo Clothing From Labrador*. ca. 1768-1772. Oil on Canvas, 76.5 x 63.5 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Accession No. 1978-23-1

[27] Angelica Kaufmann,. *Man in Eskimo Clothing*. ca. 1768-1772. Oil on Canvas, 76.5 x 63.5 cm. Library and Archives Canada, Accession no. 1978-23-2.

Governor Hugh Palliser of Newfoundland at one point brought back three Inuit visitors from Labrador. The three visitors were popular and were frequently painted. It is believed that Kaufmann painted the portraits for a patron.[28]

These paintings provide detailed images of Inuit dress and equipment from the late eighteenth century, definitely a documentary aspect of the art. From the paintings, it is possible to determine what the clothing looked like, what it was made from and the use and design of tools, such as snow goggles (used to prevent snow blindness). From this perspective alone, the important evidential and historical qualities of the work are obvious. Kaufmann was and is, however, a prominent international artist, one whose works are found in many leading galleries across the world. In an instance such as this, perspective likely plays a major role in determining which aspects of a painting are more important. Very few gallery curators would turn down a work by Angelica Kaufmann. In this instance, it can be argued that while archival qualities are present to be sure, the paintings are far from “second rate.”

Despite this international variance, it is Canadian artists who make up the majority of LAC’s art collection. Works by Peter Rindisbacher, for example, include *Indians Returning from War* and *The Method of Crawling up to a Herd of Buffaloes.*[29] The titles of these works make the evidential aspect clear, but Rindisbacher was also an accomplished artist, indeed the first resident artist in Red River. Works by Greg Curnoe, a modern artist, who is known for his paintings of bicycles among other things, are also

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[28] Angelica Kaufmann, Library and Archives Canada Artists File 705-1450, Library and Archives Canada. Also see Jim Burant, et al. *A Place In History: Twenty Years of Acquiring Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the National Archives of Canada.* Exhibition catalogue National Archives of Canada, 1991, pp. 2-7.
[29] Peter Rindisbacher, as previously discussed, was the first resident artist in the Red River settlement. He resided there from 1821 to 1826, and painted numerous detailed images of Aboriginal life. *Indians returning from War,*1825, (Accession No.: 1981-55-72) *The Method of Crawling up to a Herd of Buffaloes*, before 1824, (Accession No.: 1981-55-70). Both are watercolours with ink drawing. See Burant et al, *A Place in History*, 1991, pp. 18-21 for further information as well.

present in the collection.[30] Marc Aurèle De Foy Suzor-Côté,[31] Theophile Hamel,[32] Cornelius Krieghoff,[33] Paul Kane,[34] and William Brymner,[35] simply to name a few, are artists who figure prominently in the canon of historical Canadian art and all are well represented in the collection of Library and Archives Canada. Franklin Carmichael, a member of the Group of Seven, is also present in the collection.[36] A veritable who's who

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[30] Greg Curnoe, a Canadian artist working in the 1960s and 1970s, is known primarily as a regional artist. He spent the majority of his life in London, Ontario. His art is filled with collage elements as well as text. LAC has *Self Portrait of the Artist Greg Curnoe*, watercolour on wove paper, February 1990. (Accession no.: 1996-8-1). While important art historically, his work is not known for its evidential qualities. This work undoubtedly falls under the portrait aspect of collection. Documentary Art search,. http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.html, November 16, 2005

[31] Works by Suzor-Côté include the oil paintings *Maria Leczinska, Louis XV's Queen*, 1906 (Accession NO.: 1991-77-2), *Louis XV*, 1906 (Accession no.: 1991-77-1) both copies of works from the Louvre as well as a portrait of Sir Robert Borden done in coloured chalks (Accession no.: 1970-146-1). ArchiviaNet Documentary Art search, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.html, November 16, 2005.

[32] Works by Theophile Hamel, an early Canadian portraitist, include *John Kane*, oil on canvas, 1852 (Accession no.: 1977-33-1) and *Portrait of a Young Man of the Taché Family*, oil on canvas, 1848 (Accession no.: 1954-97-1). ArchiviaNet Documentary Art search, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.html, November 16, 2005

[33] A search for Cornelius Kreighoff in the Documentary Art category of ArchiviaNet resulted in 192 hits. Works in the collection range from *Indian Hunter on Snowshoes*, an oil on canvas from 1858-1860 (Accession no.: 1989-505-1) to the watercolour *View of Unidentified River and Islands*, (Accession no.: 1989-479-18). ArchiviaNet Documentary Art search, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.html, November 16, 2005.

[34] Paul Kane, Library and Archives Canada Artists File, 705-30. An inventory sheet from this artist's file records one Paul Kane oil painting, *untitled (Indian Bivouac)*, number Kane I-1 26-B-10. The same inventory sheet notes that another oil painting, *Blackfoot Chief and Subordinates,* from 1871, was sent to the National Gallery in 1933. In file number 9 of the artist's file, it is also noted that artifacts collected by Kane on his journey across Canada are included as well. There are also nine watercolour and pencil sketches by Kane in the LAC collection, including works such as *Cree or Assiniboin Lodges in front of Rocky Mountain Fort*, April 1848, (Accession No.: 1981-55-46) and *Rocky Mountain Indian*, August 1847 (Accession No.: 1981-55-43). See Burant et all, *A Place in History*, 1991, pp. 24-32 for detail.

[35] William Brymner, Library and Archives Canada Artists file, 705-96. The artists file for *Brymner, includes a copy of a* voucher or receipt for the then Public Archives for the purchase of oil paintings of *A Blackfoot Chief by Brymner* (oil on canvas, ca 1906, accession no.: 1992-697-1) for $350.00. A hefty sum for an artwork in 1926! In addition to this oil painting, an inventory sheet from the same artist's file indicates that the archives possesses 18 pen and ink sketches, an oil painting of Douglas Brymner and a charcoal work as well. (*Dr. Douglas Brymner*, oil on canvas, 1890-1912, accession no.: 1991-212-1). ArchiviaNet Documentary Art search, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.htm, November 16, 2005.

[36] Franklin Carmichael, known primarily for his work in oils when he was a member of the Group of Seven, was also an accomplished printmaker. While printmaking is often seen as more relevant from an archival standpoint, for realistically depicting the past, his prints are far from the landscape and cityscape views often discussed in the literature. His prints focus on the same subjects associated with the Group of Seven – the landscape. This can be seen in such works as *Large Tree against a Cloudy Sky*, linocut, n.d. (Accession no.: 1986-76-53), or *Mountain Ash*, woodcut, n.d., (Accession no.: 1986-76-60). A search for Carmichael on the search engine brings up 620 items.

of any Canadian art survey text book is thus seen in the holdings of the Archives, despite the usual assertions of the allegedly amateur status and obscurity of the artists represented in archival visual holdings.[37]

Another interesting aspect of the LAC collection is the forthcoming Portrait Gallery of Canada, currently under construction and due to open in 2007. Due to the mandates and directives of Library and Archives Canada and the National Gallery of Canada, it is LAC that is primarily responsible for preserving portraits of prominent Canadians – they are seen as historical records. The former American Embassy, directly across from Parliament Hill, is currently undergoing construction for these pieces, but a website is now available for the new Portrait Gallery.[38] Portraits are often created by prominent artists and thus LAC is currently collecting "exhibition" or "fine art" pieces in the genre of portraiture. By exhibition, it is meant that these works are often considered of gallery quality, of a type one would expect to see in a museum or art gallery. In fact, the very name indicates this blurring: the Portrait *Gallery* of Canada is to be part of Library and *Archives* Canada. This is a very evident clouding of roles between the archival and gallery institutions as well as their collections, with this gallery within an archives, and archival materials part of that gallery. The mandate to collect portraits of prominent figures and of average Canadians ensures that modern artists will continue to be represented in Library and Archives Canada's collection.

ArchiviaNet Documentary Art search, http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02011603_e.html, November 16, 2005.

[37] Hugh Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," republished in *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections by Hugh A. Taylor*, edited by Terry Cook and Gordon Dodds, Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2003, p. 80.

[38] "Our Story" *Portrait Gallery of Canada,* http://www.portraits.gc.ca/009001-1000-e.html, March 18, 2006.

While national institutions often provide a focal collection for the country, regional archives contain many interesting and unique works. The main archival institution in Manitoba is the Archives of Manitoba. As a total archives, it contains government and private records, as well as the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, although artwork is collected primarily by the Private Records section. The Archives of Manitoba has no formal definition of documentary art; rather, in an informal way, they strive to collect works that visually demonstrate how people lived and which activities they practised, particularly in Manitoba. As with many archives, this mandate combined with the unpredictable nature of donations and a limited acquisition budget has created a diverse collection over time. Works range from woodblock prints by W. J. Philips (a prominent early Winnipeg artist) to artists' papers to a painting on velvet.[39]

Elizabeth Blight is the senior archivist in charge of the visual media (both art and photographs) of the Private Records section of the Archives of Manitoba. Blight has worked in this area for most of her career. With this experience she is an excellent source of information on the archives collection policy regarding art, both currently and in the past. Blight agrees with the standard definition of documentary art, as outlined above, even if it is not formally stated at the institution.[40]

The Archives is lucky enough to have a small trust fund to be used in acquisition. This has led to a fairly large and interesting collection of art at the Archives of Manitoba. The collection includes a few early Peter Rindisbacher and Alexander Musgrove works,[41]

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[39] Interview with Elizabeth Blight, Archivist, Private Records Section, Archives of Manitoba, February 7, 2005.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Peter Rindisbacher is known for his detailed images of life of the Aboriginal people and European settlers of Red River. Alexander Musgrove was the first principal of the School of Art in Winnipeg in 1913. He was originally from Scotland.

works that the Winnipeg Art Gallery apparently turned down at the time![42] This shows a replay of events in Ottawa – historical Canadian works that are now held in high regard by the gallery world and fine-art curators were not always seen in the past as relevant for their collections. Despite this, Blight added that it was not a change of value from an archival perspective, an important point. What was valued in documentary art fifty years ago is still the type of work that is collected today. It is primarily the gallery and fine art world that is changing its idea of value, and revising its position on what is collectable, influenced by post-modern theory. Again we are reminded that archives have always seen the value of works by artists such as Kreighoff, Hamilton, or even the many anonymous works to be found in the Winkworth and Coverdale collections. From the start, works such as these have been in demand by archival repositories due to their evidential qualities. In the past, acquisition of such works was easier as there was little competition. It is only since the 1960s, when post-modern theory emerged that galleries began revisiting their ideas and developed an interest in early Canadian works previously dismissed as amateur. Blight believes that in Ottawa the archival focus remains on works of a higher artistic calibre, whereas in general the Archives of Manitoba still concentrates on more amateur works.

The 2005 acquisition of a painting on velvet by the Archives of Manitoba is an interesting example of archival ideas about art collection. According to Blight, the archives is unlikely to collect another such work, but as velvet paintings are representative of a time and taste, and certain aspects of "pop" culture, she felt it was important to include an example of this type of work in the collection for future

[42] Interview with Elizabeth Blight, February 7, 2005.

researchers.[43] Art galleries are not likely to collect such works. Despite this example, the main acquisition focus at the Archives of Manitoba is on the content of the work and the idea behind the collection is to show peoples' activities in fairly traditional, representative, or realistic genres. New media works, such as assemblage, or video and sound art, as well as conceptual art, can be problematic from the archival perspective and are not collected, even though these clearly document the contemporary world. There are also artist's papers in the collection as well.

The Archives of Manitoba and nearby galleries, such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery, do not compete for works, but will contact each other with leads and decide which institution is better placed with its mandates and interests to acquire specific works or groups of works. Archival works have also been loaned for display in art galleries such as the WAG, Mendel, and MacKenzie in the past. According to Blight, one of the main challenges comes not from galleries, but from politicians who wonder why an art collection is housed at the archives instead of with the gallery.[44]

Gallery curators, especially historical curators, often use both archival textual and visual records in their research. The end result of such research is usually a public exhibition of the art works, or at least a publication. This means curators' understanding of archives and their art collections are both important and revealing. It is also fairly safe to assume that the general public likely has a better understanding of the purpose and content of an art gallery as contrasted to an archives in terms of art collections. For these direct and comparative purposes, therefore, it is useful to consider curators' views about

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

art in archival collections, to see if these shed some light on the established definition to date.

Ottawa is, of course, the home to most national cultural institutions; in addition to Library and Archives Canada, the National Gallery of Canada can be found within walking distance of Parliament Hill. Two well-known, respected and senior curators and art historians, Rosemary Tovell and Charles Hill, have worked extensively with the collection over the past few decades, although Tovell has since retired. Given their focus and location, the familiarity they have with the collections and staff at Library and Archives Canada is not surprising. Interviews with both enriched the argument offered in this thesis.

Rosemary Tovell was, until 2005, the curator of Canadian prints and drawings at the National Gallery. Her distinguished career, with a history of strong exhibitions and scholarly writing, makes her a prominent expert in the field of Canadian art. Moreover, her specialization in Canadian prints and drawings, media which are highlighted in the various definitions of documentary art as archival, makes her perspective important. This specialization has ensured that she has a high degree of familiarity with the collection at Library and Archives Canada and good knowledge of the history of the interactions between the two institutions. As a result, she has formed definite and useful opinions on this relationship.[45]

In defining documentary art, Tovell saw it as work that was *acquired* for its visual information and that was prized for its accuracy, with aesthetics and artistic quality not

[45] While often many interpret strong opinions as a negative quality, in an interview discussion such as this it is very refreshing. It has become evident that many ideas about documentary art are not firm, that the various definitions found in the literature are often vague and that is it difficult for many to be explicit. Tovell's opinions are well founded in fact, history and personal experience.

the most relevant concerns.[46] The important qualifier here is the word "acquired" – just because a work is acquired for certain factors and reasons does not mean that it does not possess other qualities as well, or that later viewers (archivists, curators, conservators, researchers, gallery visitors, historians and so on) will agree on which attributes were primary when viewing or discussing a specific work. It is a view we have already seen once in a publication of the archives, *The Painted Past*.[47]

The important factors that came up in discussion about the nature of documentary art were those of timing (specifically the period in which the work was collected in light of Canadian art historiography, as discussed in Chapter Two), donors' wishes, and personal taste.[48] According to Tovell, until 1900 there was not a great deal of interest in Canadian history, so few private or public collections existed. This means that few Canadian artworks of a documentary or descriptive character would have been kept by people over the centuries and thus fewer works in good condition would be available for later collectors when those tastes did eventually become acceptable and then very desirable. Archives, however, were actively acquiring works during this period for their evidential value; even if no galleries saw their artistic merit.

Charles Hill is the long-time and highly accomplished curator of Canadian Art at The National Gallery of Canada. Due to the structure of the gallery, his focus is primarily on paintings, although he does have expertise in all areas. Some of his ideas and opinions on documentary art are quite similar to those of Rosemary Tovell. When it comes to a definition of documentary art, he sees no clear line, but also reiterates the common idea

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[46] Interview with Rosemary Tovell, Curator of Canadian Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Canada, October 18, 2004.
[47] Antoniou, *The Painted Past*, 1984, p. 1.
[48] Interview with Rosemary Tovell, October 18, 2004..

that it provides visual information on history, environment and social conditions.[49] However, he also states that all art documents the history of an artist, so again we see how misleading the term can become; archives use the term documentary art to refer to a select type of art while not broadly publishing or accurately defining the concept. Because of this the term itself inherently leads to a much broader definition by the general public and a concomitant blind spot in archival theory and practice.

Hill also discussed other contextual aspects of art, such as an artist's intentions in making the art; the degree of their interpretation of a scene; the idea of propaganda and social comment as deliberate themes in the art, all ideas which do not come up often in archival discussions of art. There still seems to be a general assumption in archival discourse that artists portray images truthfully and accurately. The issues of mediation and interpretation were highlighted only by the art gallery curators in interviews, showing if nothing else an oversight in archival treatment. Hill indicated that archival collections tend to be more conservative, focusing on earlier works that are clearly historical in age as well as content, but he pointed out that most history paintings, even early ones, are painted according to contemporary artistic conventions and often therefore include many fictional or stylistic elements.[50] This does not change the art historical value of the work; in fact, it can be more telling. Fictional and inserted elements often highlight important considerations of an age, but they also challenge some of the accepted notions of "documentary" or "archival" art as more factual, representative, accurate, and descriptive in character, art as objective evidence, not subjective narrative. While this in turn reflects

[49] Interview with Charles Hill, Curator of Canadian Art, National Gallery of Canada, October 19, 2004.
[50] Ibid.

the general positivist notions of such archival pioneers as Sir Hilary Jenkinson, it may do a disservice by denying archival art better description contexts.

An interesting finding that came from interviewing Charles Hill was an indication that he did not quite understand the function of archives. He questioned why archives collect art at all, and wondered about the motives of archivists. He linked the growth of art sections within archives, especially at LAC, to the employment of people with art degrees in archives, noting a significant change in direction in the past thirty years.[51] He also questioned the value of study collections.[52] An art gallery collects to preserve and display art and the curators usually have a major say in new acquisitions. Justifications for new acquisitions are often linked to exhibitions, so in many ways galleries collect for future shows as planned by the curators – the curators, in effect, collect for their own purposes. However, an archives simply collects works of enduring historical or "documentary" value for everyone to use. There is no particular use in mind – archives may use them for exhibition purposes, and researchers as sources for historical information in many disciplines, as illustrations for publications to illuminate arguments or texts, as part of education kits for schools, for genealogy research, or simply for personal enjoyment. Archivists cannot predict all the uses for a particular type of record, nor do they collect for their own research purposes. To be sure, archivists do research and publish materials pertaining to their collections, but much of this work is archival and not artistic in nature and the collections themselves are still collected for the use of all of society.

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[51] Laura Brandon shared this opinion, stating that the archives is going "overboard" and collecting everything. Interview with Laura Brandon, Curator, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, October 18, 2004.
[52] Interview with Charles Hill, October 19, 2004.

Another major distinctive feature of archival art stems from the issue of taste. Taste is not a constant in art appreciation. It changes over time and varies between regions and across nations, genders, ethnicities, and classes. This has a major impact on a gallery's collection, but from an archival standpoint, the basis of what is considered collectable has not changed greatly over the past century. This can be directly linked to the collection of art for what it represents, not for its compositional style or harmony or structure, not even for its popular or scholarly resonance.

Donor decisions are an issue that came up in discussions with both archivists and curators.[53] A private donor has the right, of course, to decide where their collection, or individual artwork, will be placed. The choice can be made for numerous reasons, be they sentimental, practical, political, or even financial. Curators and archivists both often actively pursue donors, especially major donors, and yet also accept some donations that are unsolicited, but either way the donors themselves make the final choice of location. Donations can also introduce a bit of chance and variety into a collection – works that might not have been purchased may be accepted for numerous reasons, adding different aspects to the collection.

Despite some differences in view, a good relationship had developed between LAC and the National Gallery. This is most evident in regard to large collections, like the Coverdale Collection that had to be shared between the two institutions. In 1970 the W.H. Coverdale (formerly the Manoir Richelieu) Collection was purchased with government funds from W.H. Coverdale for the then Public Archives of Canada. Coverdale, who had been the president of Canada Steamship Lines, had amassed a huge

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[53] Interview with Doug Lewis, Assistant Curator, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, November 10, 2004. Jim Burant also discussed donation as a means to acquire a collection. (Interview on October 19, 2004.)

collection of Canadiana in many media. In total, 2,482 works were donated, which included 224 maps and 2,145 drawings and prints. As per an agreement, the National Gallery assessed the collection with the archives, and selected 62 works for its collection.[54] It seems as though in this instance archivists and curators agreed that certain works would be better suited to a gallery setting. This sharing of resources and information continues to the present as well. As a matter of policy, the two institutions do not compete against each other at auctions and both are quite willing to lend works to each other for exhibitions.[55]

Another important national institution, the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, holds Canada's collection of officially produced war art, a unique and fascinating visual record of the military aspect of our country's history. During the First and Second World Wars, a commission existed to choose and fund artists to produce works depicting both the war and home fronts. Many prominent Canadian artists got their start in this program; Arthur Lismer, F.H. Varley, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, and Alex Coville, to name just a few. The tradition has continued throughout the century, with art being commissioned to document all aspects of Canadian military involvement abroad and at home, up to and including Somalia and Afghanistan.

This collection of war art at the Canadian War Museum has been a cause for discussion over the years; as the works were commissioned and thereafter owned by a federal government agency, the Department of National Defence, they are official records of the Canadian government. It could be argued that, as government records, they are

[54] Taste again plays a role here, and individual curators likely could have made different decisions, selecting more works. While it is certain that the two institutions shared the collection, it is unclear whether this was a condition of the government funding for the purchase of the collection. Reference number from the Library and Archives Canada website, November 21, 2005. www.collectionscanada.ca/art/050602_e.html

[55] All Ottawa interviewees highlighted this point: Burant, Devine, Brandon, Tovell and Hill.

subject to the *Library and Archives of Canada Act* (2004) and its similar predecessors, which requires any government records, in any medium, including art, to be transferred to the archives if it is appraised as having archival and historical value. However, this major war museum also exists to document Canada's military history, and thus eager to hold and display this collection, along with thousands of non-art artifacts and records. Few argue over the location of the collection today, but the point remains that there is undeniably a very strong "record" or "documentary" aspect to the collection, which depicts the war through artist's eyes.

Laura Brandon, a prominent art historian and the curator in charge of this collection at the Canadian War Museum, provided an interesting view of the nature of this form of art. She believes that by labeling something as "documentary art," it is being pigeon-holed in a narrowing category, in essence, adding a layer of interpretation to the art which could cause a viewer/researcher to focus only on certain qualities or aspects of a work and ignore many others that it possesses or reflects.[56] This is a very concise and evocative critique of the major fault with the label of "documentary art." Today even the term "documentary" is loaded with associations, despite formal dictionary definitions such as "being or consisting of documents; contained or certified in writing, or relating to or employing documentation in literature or art."[57] Now one is more likely to think of something being "documentary" as an investigative film rather than static archival documents, whether they be textual or visual. Documentary films have been growing in prominence, moving into the mainstream. Recent very popular documentaries have looked at the life of caribou on their travels to the calving ground (*Being Caribou*) to fast

[56] Interview with Laura Brandon, October 18, 2004.
[57] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1996, p. 342.

food (*Super Size Me*) to the current political and social climate (*Fahrenheit 9/11* or *Bowling For Columbine*). The increasing popularity of documentaries has also spawned the genre of the "mockumentary," a new and popular genre in pop culture. Documentary films are hardly objective or completely "truthful" -- all terms that are often associated with "documentary" art in archives, but rather strive to make points, portray events, highlight things that are endangered, and try to change opinions. Documentaries, while informative and enlightening in many instances, are still portrayed through the lens of the creator. This is just one example of how loaded the word documentary is becoming and just one possible association that novice researchers in archives could be bringing as they encounter "documentary art" for the first time.

But the problem goes well beyond the semantics of labeling something as documentary. The core question is what is being documented in the art itself. There is the traditional idea that documentary art should show, fairly realistically, an event, activity, person, or place, but what about the documentation of ideas? For example, Lawren Harris' later works are in some respects documentary evidence of Theosophical thought and his interest and belief in this philosophy/religion.[58] Why is "documenting" this not seen as important to archives? How and when did the decision to focus on documenting certain things emerge, but not others? These are issues that are also not explained in literature or practice, and ones that open up possibilities for future study.

Other aspects of art are often not looked at as well, it being assumed that artists portray truthfully and exactly what they see. While war artists *were* documenting

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[58] In his later years, Harris became increasingly involved in the Theosophical movement, using his art to express his spiritual views. Theosophy is a religion or philosophy that holds that certain universal truths are present to some degree in all world religions, but have become diluted and lost over time. Theosophists also believe all things are interconnected, and that once a practitioner understands the unity of the cosmos they achieve a perfect spirituality. Dennis Reid. *Atma Buddhi Manas: The Later Work of Lawren S. Harris.* Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition catalogue, 1985, p. 14-17.

individual events in the larger process of an international conflict, there is undeniably more than that to many of these images. Brandon pointed out that some art was clearly designed for propaganda purposes, while other artists were dealing with an immensely powerful personal reaction to the scenes they saw around them – whether it was the carnage of the front trenches or hundreds of women working in factories producing munitions.[59] This sense of broader interpretive context is surprisingly often missing from archival considerations of art, yet as Laura Brandon reminds us, for all art one needs "to know circumstances, reasons, constraints behind the image before it can be read as a document."[60] In contrast, archives often focus on the image itself, without thinking of the issues behind the image, the context surrounding the image.[61]

Continuing with the perspective of art curators but at the local or provincial level, Winnipeg is fortunate to have a very large and vibrant art scene with many galleries. The largest and most prominent one, the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG), houses an extensive collection and has many local as well as international artists showcased at exhibitions every year. At the WAG, there are curators of historical, contemporary, decorative and Inuit art. Curators in the historical and contemporary fields all had interesting and relevant ideas about documentary art.

Mary-Jo Hughes is the WAG's Historical Curator. She is familiar with archives, and has both used archives for research and borrowed art works from archives for exhibitions. Once again, it became quickly evident that as a curator, Hughes has problems with the term "documentary art," but not with the idea of archives collecting

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[59] Interview with Laura Brandon, October 18, 2004.
[60] Ibid.
[61] As with all generalities, there are exceptions, the most notable being Jim Burant's work, exemplified in his article "The Military Artist and the Documentary Art Record," *Archivaria* 26, Summer 1988, pp. 33-51, as discussed in Chapter Two. This article does provide an art historical context, as well as an in-depth discussion of the practical use of such art.

art.[62] According to Hughes, the term, "documentary" is "full of suggestion."[63] While she has a good working relationship with both local and national archives and sees a role for archives in collecting art works, she thinks that the blurred lines between the two institutions are problematic. Consider even Hughes' official title: Curator of "Historical" Art, which bluntly points out that all this art is historically important – but does this mean it is "documentary art"? In discussion, Hughes certainly conceded the importance of archives having preserved art by early Canadian artists such as William Hind, art which was not aesthetically valued by many at the time, but now has become prominent.[64] Again, it is the vagueness of the term, "documentary," itself and the ambiguous definitions in professional discourse, as well as changing ideas in art, that become problematic in the artistic world, not the act of collecting art by archives.

Mary Reid is the curator of Contemporary Art and Photography at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It is possibly due to her interest in photography that she also identified the term, "documentary art," as one that can cause confusion.[65] There is a definite trend towards the use of the word "documentary" in describing the work of many contemporary photographers. Reid named Edward Burtynsky and Mark Ruwedel as two such examples. Both are accomplished and celebrated visual artists. Both seek to document various things in their work, but always with a strong attention to the aesthetic. A recent touring show by Mark Ruwedel entitled "Written on the Land" focuses on

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[62] Interview with Mary-Jo Hughes, Curator of Historical Art, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, February 24, 2005.
[63] Ibid.
[64] This is yet another example of an early Canadian artist falling from favour, only to be rediscovered and valued again artistically. Mary Jo Hughes, *Hindsight: William Hind in the Canadian West*. The Winnipeg Art Gallery, exhibition catalogue, 2002.
[65] Interview with Mary Reid, Curator of Contemporary Art and Photography, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, February 3, 2005.

documenting human interaction with the landscape.[66] In a series of hauntingly beautiful black-and-white photographs, Ruwedel's images reveal ancient stone drawings, old railway lines and even the sinister beauty of nuclear test sites. To the viewer, there is no doubt about the historical and evidential qualities of the photos or of their artistic quality. Similarly, Burtynsky's work has focused on Chinese industrial sites of late, both recent developments in China's rapid expansion and older, even abandoned, sites. Images of the Three Gorges Dam are included, documenting the destruction of landscapes and cities along the floodplain. Again, these photographs are striking, even disturbing, but undeniably artistic. They also document something seen by few Western eyes.[67]

Reid is quick to acknowledge that many photograph collections are also archival, providing the Time-Life collections or other newspaper photographic collections as examples. These types of images were taken for their evidential qualities, usually by reporters, and as such Reid sees them as potentially having slanted and propagandistic qualities as well.[68] However, lines are blurring once again, as many of these images now come up for auction and are increasingly collectable, valued for both their aesthetic and historical qualities.[69]

Another confusing factor, evident in discussion with Reid, is the increasingly prominent notion of visual culture. Reflecting post-modern theory, visual culture encompasses all visual media: art, advertisements, posters, videos, the images that bombard us every day. All visual materials, be they gallery art or archival art, fall under this new category, resulting in a further blurring of boundaries. It is helpful to note that

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[66] *Mark Ruwedel: Written on the Land.* Presentation House Gallery, exhibition catalogue, North Vancouver, Canada, 2002. Exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, September 8 – December 5, 2004.
[67] *Edward Burtynski Photographic Works*. http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/, February 20, 2006.
[68] Interview with Mary Reid, February 3, 2005.
[69] Ibid. It seems that almost everything can achieve collectable status these days, as a quick search of eBay demonstrates!

"visual culture," which is now becoming a topic of discussion, is something that has been around for centuries, and something that the archives has collected in a variety of guises over the years. While it is true that until fairly recently galleries have been fairly traditional in the works they collected, archives, especially in Canada, have often assembled collections of ephemera, such as posters, buttons, designs, and medals. It is not archival collecting policy that is changing here; it seems that society is only now beginning to see the importance of studying all of the visual culture that surrounds our everyday lives. It is fortunate indeed that those building up archival collections had the foresight to preserve such materials, and it does seem probable that it is in the gallery world where this rethinking of visual objects will have the most impact.

An interesting perspective on these issues is evident in the ideas of Doug Lewis, an artist and curator. As an Assistant Curator of Art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, he is intimately familiar with that organization's collection, having worked as the vault technician as well. When asked for a definition of documentary art, he responded that, as an artist, he finds the term to be an oxymoron, while as a curator he would interpret it to describe work that the creator consciously intended to document or depict some person, place or thing.[70] Here is another interesting qualification, limiting the idea of documentary art to art that was intended as such by the creator. As a curator, Lewis focuses primarily on very contemporary work and has not had cause to use archives for professional research; however, he is aware of many curators who use them both for research and for exhibitions. As an artist, Lewis has also demonstrated a clear interest in art theory, as well as a focus on the transient nature of art – some is not created to last forever, especially in current times. This raises new issues. As art continues to change

[70] Interview with Doug Lewis, November 10, 2004.

and evolve across the century and what is now contemporary becomes historical, will archives continue to collect it, or will archival collections end in the mid-twentieth century with traditional "realistic" paintings, drawings and prints?

Lewis also notes the important influence of different collecting mandates. Mandates do vary from institution to institution. The WAG, for example, qualifies contemporary art as anything produced after 1970. Many people today have problems identifying thirty-five-year-old work as contemporary. Some institutions have a roving date – similar to copyright changes in an archives. Each year what is considered contemporary art advances, and the earliest years pass over into the historical collection. With this model, often twenty years seems to be the limit for the idea of contemporary. This means works from the 1980s are entering historical collections; does this distinction of what is historical carry over into archives? Are they willing to collect work created as recently as twenty-five years ago? Or is the idea of what is historical, chronologically, another problem to be faced by collecting institutions? Perhaps for archives, this reflects the approach of records scheduling for government or business records. Those records still in active use by the creating agency are maintained in house or, when the need for them in contemporary work becomes intermittent, in records storage centres; all such records are referred to as contemporary or operational. After a further passage of time, records move on along the continuum. Some designated as having archival value are transferred to archival repositories, the others are destroyed. While this distinction has, therefore, been central to archives in terms of managing and acquiring textual records, can it be translated, by analogy, to visual art records as well? It can also be noted that while history is left to determine which artists enter the canon, and whose papers become

of interest, when it comes to documenting current and prominent events, LAC does acquire contemporary news photographs almost immediately after an event. Works of prominent and contemporary photographers are also acquired, especially by the Portrait Gallery of Canada.[71]

In another interesting blurring of boundaries between these two institutions, many art galleries also have their own archives. While the archives in these institutions often focus on institutional records that is not always the case. The National Gallery of Canada does have its own archives, with a mandate to collect institutional records, records pertaining to the history of the gallery and its exhibitions, and information on artists in the collections.[72] In some instances, artists choose to donate their papers to the Archives of the National Gallery, usually artists with strong relationships to curators at the gallery. Donations of this sort usually only occur a few times a year.[73] However, if an item such as a sketch or sketchbook is part of the collections, the archivist and curator work together to determine whether the item would be better suited to the archive of the NGC or the art gallery.

An example of this was the transfer to the National Gallery's Archives in 1997 and donation in 1999 of the *Art Metropole* collection. This collectionbegan as a repository for items created by artists, but not collected in mainstream galleries; it consists of artists' multiples (objects the artist created more than one of, identical objects

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[71] Portraits by singer/photographer Bryan Adams and artist Lori Nedwich were listed on the Portrait Gallery of Canada site as recent acquisitions: *Diana Krall, singer, pianist*, 1999, by Bryan Adams. PA-215138, *Queer Affair*, from Heroine Series, 1999, by Lori Nedwich, PA-212977.
"Recent Acquisitions," *Portrait Gallery of Canada,*http://portraits.go.ca/009001-2000-e.html, December 16, 2006.

[72] The Winnipeg Art Gallery has an archives as well; however, the archivist position is a contract one, and it is vacant for part of the year. Timing did not make it possible to delve into a similar discussion in Winnipeg.

[73] Interview with Cindy Campbell, Archivist, National Gallery of Canada, October 18, 2004.

that are still "fine" art), maps, books, journals, and artist's videos pertaining to conceptual art. The collection was begun in 1974 by the artists' collective, General Idea, which consisted of A.A. Bronson, Jorge Zontal and Felix Partz. By 1997 the collection consisted of 13,000 items. The aim of the collection is to "preserve the artistic production and documentary evidence of the conceptual art movement in Canada and internationally, chiefly from the 1960s onward."[74] This movement focuses on the idea and the process of art creation, not the finished product in itself. For many artists it also served to protest against the commercialization of art and the gallery world.[75] Initially many of these items did not fit into the mandates of existing institutions; they were, and still are, seen by many as ephemera. Many items were individually published and are far from the mainstream, so most libraries were not interested. Archives still focus mainly on historical art, partly because it is hard to assess what will have value and age well. Until fairly recently, as noted above, many galleries also focused on traditional media, so these unconventional items in the Art Metropole Collection were not welcome in many other collections.

The items now housed in the Archives of the National Gallery of Canada have a detailed finding aid that shows the diversity of the collection. It includes publications, videos, organizational papers, and even mail art.[76] The website notes this material is available for exhibition. Here we have an example of works that again fit in the grey area – are they archival? The aim of the collection (and its creators) was to document and

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[74] "Art Metropole finding aid," *National Gallery of Canada Library,* http://www.artmetropole.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=links.FA_dsp_artmet_collections June 18, 2005. It becomes easy to see in this example how the desire to document grows: these artists wanted to document a movement as it happened, maintaining records for posterity.

[75] Shearer West, editor. *The Bulfinch Guide to Art History*. Boston: A Bulfinch Press Book, 1996, pp. 351-352.

[76] "Art Metropole finding aid," *National Gallery of Canada Library Website,* http://national.gallery.ca/english/library/biblio/ngc005.html, June 18, 2005.

preserve evidence of conceptual art, a genre that is often somewhat ephemeral. Such a characteristic clearly fits into the mandate of an archives. Yet the collection does not reflect the visual realism that is generally required of documentary art in most archives. Parts of the collection were on display in the National Gallery itself in August 2004. So the collection is held and managed as an archival fonds in an archives that is within a major art gallery and such "archives" are used for art gallery exhibitions.

In a similar vein, Gallery 1.1.1., at the School of Art at the University of Manitoba, has as part of its collection the L.L. Fitzgerald Study Collection. This collection consists of sketches, but also includes photographs, letters and family papers. It was donated by the artist's daughter, Patricia Fitzgerald, in 1979.[77] After donation, accessioning and description of the collection, a "documentary exhibition of selected study materials" was put on exhibit in the gallery.[78] This is another example of archival materials held by a gallery treated as an archival collection and exhibited as art.

The twist with this collection is that, while it holds some archival textual records and photographs, for the most part the sketches are not necessarily "visual representations" or realistic representations of the landscape, as is often the focus of archives. The sketches range from the earliest parts of Fitzgerald's career to the end. Subjects include landscapes, still-lifes, abstracts, and figural sketches. Many of them are simple pencil-line drawings; however, some prints and etching plates are included. The collection is primarily used for research, but works have been exhibited at various times other than the opening show.

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[77] *The Fitzgerald Study Collection*. School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. Collection brochure, n.d. The donation was designated to remain as a whole entity by the donor, Patricia FitzGerald. Even though the University of Manitoba has a fully functional archival program, this material was expressly donated for the formation of the FitzGerald Study Centre.
[78] Ibid.

Throughout this discussion, many issues have become apparent, which may help to clarify to some degree the purpose of an art gallery or museum. While post-modern theory has challenged ideas of fine art and put into sharp focus the changing values of taste in the discussion of art theory, galleries still must establish a collecting mandate of some sort; none is able to collect all art from all times and places and genres. The art world has become very aware of subjective values of what is “art” and continually questions them. However, there is still a notion of “fine art” in practice.[79] Simply put, galleries tend towards the collection of the finest works of an artists’ oeuvre, as agreed upon by recognized experts, even acknowledging that such agreement is continually shifting. If an artist has had multiple “periods” or phases, often a single work can and does represent that entire period within a collection. As with archives, private donation adds a bit of variety or “spice” into the mix, as donors can give works with a variety of qualities, styles and creators. Nevertheless, to qualify for purchase by a gallery, artworks usually have to have received a researched justification by a curator and pass by some form of committee for approval. Galleries are not often interested in acquiring all or even the majority of works of an artist’s career. They are interested in representative pieces of high quality, the cream of the crop.[80] Justifications for purchase often involve linking the proposed acquisition to the institution’s mandate and discussion of how the art work involved will enhance the overall collection.[81] While this approval process helps eliminate some aspects of personal bias, taste is still a more important acquisition factor

[79] In interviews, Elizabeth Blight, Mary Reid and Mary-Jo Hughes all used the term “fine art.”
[80] This is not completely true, as there are examples of galleries devoted to a single artist and their career, but they are far from the norm. Examples are the Dali Museum, Rembrandt Museum, and Picasso Museum, and even they can have a few works of contemporaries for illustrative purposes.
[81] For example, if the work is by a prominent local artist and the gallery does not yet have a work by her or him, that can be an important factor. Also, if it is an artist in the collection but the work shows another aspect of the career of that person, its value increases.

at a gallery than an archives, as are current trends and art theory. Time is a fickle master and some artistic trends have not necessarily aged well and some have not aged at all, and there is still the harsh reality of space requirements, budgets and the historical fact that galleries and museums were never intended to house all examples, just the best.

By contrast to this summary of the art acquisition emphasis of art galleries, archives that collect art are normally not interested in the finest works. In fact, archives often try to send the "good" stuff to the galleries if it comes to them. The key focus for the archives is whether or not the works have "enduring historical value" -- despite the fact that some gallery curators see ulterior personal motives and questions of "fine art" taste evident in some art archivists have in their collecting decisions.[82] This historical value does not have to stem from artistic quality and therefore the art works may not reflect the avant-garde or cutting-edge visual culture of the time. However, many of these works may come to be appreciated as "fine art" over time. This is not a change in the mandate of the archives, but rather a change in taste in the greater society that art galleries cater to.

Archivists see themselves, with some exceptions, as needing distance from the present before judging a work's historical merit.[83] Curators work closely with artists, often developing personal relationships that last for years. They write books on their contemporaries, arrange exhibitions of their works and are often instrumental in developing the reputation that can make or break an artist's career. They create much of the information that then is used to judge whether an artist is carried over for remembrance by future generations. Thus, in some ways, galleries make history;

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[82] Again, Charles Hill, Rosemary Tovell and Laura Brandon questioned archivists' motives in collecting art.
[83] Interview with Jim Burant, October 19, 2004. .

archives preserve it. However, archives still tend toward the preservation of works of a certain genre, that of naturalistic representation of people, places, and things. While this was the standard mode for all artistic creation when archival collections emerged in Canada at the turn of the century, art production has changed drastically since then. As works by artists such as Arthur MacKay from the Regina Five, or Rita Letendre from Quebec, both of whom worked in cutting edge abstract and non-representational modes move into the category of "historic" art, what will the archives do? Will they continue to collect traditional art, or broaden to encompass a wider mode of art creation in the collections?

The Centre du patrimoine, part of the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre in Winnipeg, provides an interesting case study in the archival approach to art collection. The Centre has a long history, beginning as a Historical Society in St. Boniface in 1902. The mandate of the institution is to "conserve and promote the documentation and resources which have cultural, heritage, judicial, and historical value; the product of Francophone presence in Western Canada and Manitoba for over the past 250 years."[84] For most of its history, the Society was affiliated with various religious orders, and not surprisingly contains many religious records, including some of religious orders whose work occasionally extend beyond the Franco-Manitoban community. Until the 1980s, many of the visual images collected by the Centre were religious in nature, but a history project undertaken in that decade broadened the collection. Of special interest is that this project included abstract and non-representational images for the Centre's collection.

Jacinthe Duval is the archivist responsible for the art collection. According to Duval, in the early days of the Centre du Patrimoine, art was not a major focus. When it

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[84] "Home Page" *Le centre du patrimoine*, http://www.shsb.mb.ca/englishindex.htm, January 19, 2006.

was acquired, it was seen as a supplementary illustration to depict visually the history of the region told primarily through textual records. This reflects the traditional ideas held by most archives. Ideas have since changed. The change is not as drastic as a change in the collection mandate, but more in the interpretation of that mandate. Duval stated that the policy has not changed as much as the people and ideas have changed, with art now assuming a larger place in the collection.[85]

This is a significant departure from the norm in many ways. While in most archival art collections, documentary art is collected for what it depicts, the Centre is also interested in who created it. If the creator or artist was a member of the Franco-Manitoban communities on which the archives focuses, then the artwork can be included in the archives. This provides a broad view of Franco-Manitoban culture, creating a visual insight into its artists and the greater community they represent and evolve from. Instead of simply depicting realistically a visual representation of life and the appearance of the surroundings of the community, this archival collection also contains a record of the artistic ideas, techniques and aesthetic theories and artistic tastes of that community. In many ways it documents the artistic community itself. Many practising artists in Winnipeg and the community of St. Boniface will likely not receive a great deal of international exposure and their work will not be collected by many galleries. By not focusing only on the content of a work, a record of a broad slice of current and past artistic practice is preserved. Some of the art works were acquired through the religious orders – works by students in the schools where the nuns taught, thereby also showing the

[85] Interview with Jacinthe Duval, Archivist, Centre du patrimoine, April 21, 2005.

state of art education in the community. Prominent artists, such as Pauline Boutal,[86] are also included.

Much of the main body of the collection was acquired in the 1980s, through donation, as part of the large history project on St. Boniface already mentioned. However, one man was also instrumental at the beginning of this broader more interpretive approach to archival art collecting. Bernard Mulaire, a Winnipeg-based artist and curator, donated his own works to the Centre in the 1970s. He also had many contacts in the local art community, whom he also urged to donate works to the Centre. The size of this archival institution is likely also a contributing factor to its unique collecting policy. A smaller archives, located within a larger cultural centre, the Centre du patrimoine works closely with many other institutions. In addition to having a good working relationship with other archives in the community (such as the Archives of Manitoba), it also works closely with the Art Gallery of the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre. In addition to storing its own art works in its state-of-the-art vault, the archives holds the gallery's works as well. This proximity ensures that both archival and gallery collections are easily available for the art gallery's shows. The archives itself also has a very prominent display area in the main entrance of the Centre.

Much of the collection of the Centre would fall under more tradition definitions, consisting of historical views, portraits, landscapes, and so on. There is a series of portraits, for example, of the mayors of St. Boniface. There are a few three-dimensional objects in the collection, but the majority of such items go to the St. Boniface Museum.

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[86] Pauline Boutal was an important Winnipeg artist during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Jacinthe Duval referred to her as the mother of the artists' community, in interview on April 21, 2005. Boutal worked at Brigdens of Winnipeg, a prominent graphic design company that illustrated the Eaton's catalogue, and is also known for her set designs for theatre.

As with almost all archives, there is an extensive photography collection, one that is separated, conceptually at least, from the art.[87] It is interesting to note that there are photographs in the collection that were taken for artistic purposes, although they are now primarily used for historical research.[88] Despite the fact that most of the collection to date falls under more traditional definitions, it is evident that the Centre du patrimoine is working in a very innovative way in Canada in regards to the breadth and focus of its art acquisition for archives. It is striving even more for a total archives, looking to document not only the physical landscape, activities and prominent persons through their visual collections, but a broader view of a society in general, incorporating the ideas and philosophies, the moods and styles, as explored by artists through all manner of works.

At this stage, both the theoretical ideas of documentary art as seen in literature and the practical ideas as used by archivists have been explored. Archivists, as well as art curators from a variety of institutions, have shared their views, with a range of issues emerging from these discussions. It now becomes possible to draw some conclusions about the nature of documentary art in Canadian archives.

[87] In most discussions and interviews, with archivists and curators, there still seems to be a tendency to differentiate between art and photographs. While at first glance it is probably easier to see it simply as an aid to describing the media discussed, it often reflects a conceptual or intellectual division between the two.
[88] Interview with Jacinthe Duval, April 21, 2005.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The traditionally understood definition of documentary art as outlined in this thesis still seems widely accepted, despite some variations reflected in actual collections. There is a strong pull in the archival world to focus on works that document the Canadian landscape and, to some extent, its people. The broad idea of documentary art as art with evidential qualities opens up the possibility of collecting art of all kinds. Even though it is not necessarily obvious, every work has evidential and documentary qualities. Most people could easily dismiss abstract and non-representational artworks as not appropriate for collection by an archival repository; these works often deal with ideas and philosophies, or reflect reactions to particular events or societal issues. Why has the idea of realistic visual depiction of people and place alone been deemed archival, and not, as at the Centre du patrimoine, the depiction of ideas, cultures, local tastes?

Part of the reason is tradition. The original intent of Library and Archives Canada's collection, as envisioned by the second Dominion Archivist, Sir Arthur

Doughty, was to enliven the history books of the country with illustrations.[1] While the history of the emergence and growth of visual media in Canadian archives has not yet been studied, it also appears that, at least at the then Public Archives of Canada, it was thought that art could to document earlier periods and photography the twentieth century.[2] This suggests a belief, then held, that images, whether they be painted or developed from a photographic negative, presented a truthful picture of the past, one that had evidential and historical value. However, historical study has broadened considerably in the last half of the twentieth century, especially in social and cultural history. Even "realistic" and representative images are known to contain bias. The study of history and indeed, art history, has changed too; the role of women and other disadvantaged groups in the past has emerged as a major focus of study, a substantial revision of the history of the First Nations of Canada has occurred, oral culture is recorded and studied. Art theory has changed drastically since 1960, and post-modernism has caused many to reflect on ideas and assumptions previously held. While these changes in the theory behind and the focus of historical study have resulted in the wider collecting mandates of many archival institutions and radically altered views of appraisal for mainstream textual records, a more traditional view of documentary art still exists. Art itself has changed enormously in this century, with new media, new ideas and new interactivities. This has left many institutions at a crossroads, as even art galleries and museums struggle to decide what to collect and when. Archives, with their

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[1] Greg Spurgeon, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archive." *Archivaria.* No. 17, Winter 1983-84, pp. 62-63.

[2] Jim Burant, *General Guide Series*: *Documentary Art and Photography Division*, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1992. pp. 1-3.

traditional historical mandate and mindset, face even greater challenges, in following Canada's total archives approach of collecting all media.

A major principle governing the care of every type of archival media is that contextual information is needed in order to understand the content. Who created the record, when, where, for what reason and what audiences(s)? It is important to understand this to appreciate and use a record, regardless of media. It seems that only select aspects of context are used for art media – it is approached from a traditional historical viewpoint more than an art historical one. Realistic artwork has been valued for its evidential qualities, while almost disregarding the context of its creation. Realism is not truth, and if a picture is worth a thousand words, it can most certainly be worth a thousand lies! To understand the full importance of an artwork as a historical record, one must look deeper than its surface. Collecting a general slice of art across time creates a record of the history of Canadian art as well. It is interesting that despite this broad definition a fairly narrow focus has emerged in scholarship. The idea of documenting Canada through its art has resulted in almost a desire for life-like representations of people and the place – this creates documentation of what Canada looks like, not what it necessarily is!

Archives should, and likely will, continue their role in collecting certain types of art that do not fit gallery mandates. Indeed, many galleries have fairly firm and well-described collecting mandates. It is also true that while archives have not generally altered collecting policy in regard to art over the past hundred years or so, the gallery world is facing great alterations in its collecting habits, a trend that began in the 1960s and is likely to continue. The real role that archives should take is in providing a full,

detailed, contextual picture of these types of records. This is the goal of much archival work in textual records, but it seems lacking in visual records. There are no broad, all encompassing descriptive standards. RAD is fairly technical in its scope, and there seems to be an emphasis on brevity. Size, media, and provenance are all important, but there are other aspects of a work to look at. This is all well and good for a brief reference, but if a picture can be worth a thousand words, then its context, meanings and impact can hardly be described in two hundred!

At Library and Archives Canada and the Archives of Manitoba, textual records are described in finding aids and often the researcher must work closely with the archivist to locate the records wanted and to gain the full context of the records. In Manitoba, photographic records are simply stored in the reading room, filed alphabetically and are self serve. In LAC, subject indexes with copies of images are again filed in drawers. No context or information is provided in the files, simply the images, titles or subjects and reference numbers. Many first-time researchers do not know how to use records properly to access the wealth of information they provide. This is the same with other visual records. In the case of art, even more context is needed since many people are unfamiliar with the record as documentary medium, and feel unsure about interpreting such works. To gain all the information needed, it would help the researcher to know the context of the work as well as something about the creator and the history of the period. This is often presented in archival publications and websites. What is not provided is the art historical context. Bringing art historical knowledge to the archives in depth to contextualize the artworks is necessary. Archives have not had a problem with providing the historical context, so this simply needs to be expanded. There are already numerous

sources on Canadian art history, so simply making these sources available and working with galleries to create a fuller record would be very beneficial. The field of Canadian art history is undergoing dramatic growth at this point. Archivists can contribute to this growth and also learn from the information it provides. This type of contextual artistic information makes the records much more valuable to researchers. The content of a work is very informative, but one must consider how it was represented as well. This can be very revealing about attitudes in the wider society.[3] Tastes in art are as revealing as the evidential record of types of dress or modes of transportation.

There are numerous other factors influencing the use of and ideas about documentary art. Curators do not seem to be aware of the function of an archives and almost see art archivists in a role as similar to theirs. While few admit to outright competition for artworks, there is a general sense that many curators in Ottawa did see the archives as collecting works that were not especially "appropriate," or were of artistic value primarily, not evidential.[4] The question of "why" this occurs did emerge when discussing archival collections, usually with the reason ascribed to a personalized response of an archivist collecting this, or pursuing that, collection.[5] Art galleries collect works to exhibit, works that tie into and complement an existing collection, and works that represent the best and most aesthetically pleasing work of an artist or period. Archives, however, collect for the general researching public, acquiring many works and

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[3] Knowing that Douglas Brymner encouraged his son, prominent Canadian artist William Brymner, to learn how to paint popular images that would sell reveals something about Canadian society? (J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada, A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966, p. 219).

[4] Most curators interviewed in Ottawa were politically correct. Yet while both sides agree that they work together and do not compete at auction, there was an underlying sense that there was a competition for particular donors.

[5] Interview with Charles Hill, Curator of Canadian Art, National Gallery of Canada, October 19, 2004, and interview with Laura Brandon, Curator at the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, October 18, 2004.

often full collections of works, not cherry-picking only the "best," that will provide visual information about persons, places, or events in Canada's past. Art does not have to tie into the exhibition schedule for the next five years; all it needs is enduring value in reflecting some historical reality, and an understanding that someday, somewhere, someone will find value in the record.

To further complicate matters, the contextual approach of archives has been appealing to art galleries in recent years, reflecting post-modern sensibilities. Galleries have been exhibiting not just "fine art" in finished and polished works, but also showing alongside these works such items as background sketches, early drafts or versions of pictures, subsequent engravings or illustrations of them in books and magazines, contemporary maps and tourist literature of the locales depicted and, of course, the artist's diaries, journals, letters and business correspondence.[6] There is a renewed interest in women in art. The first solo show ever by an Aboriginal artist opened in early 2006 at the National Gallery of Canada,[7] and works of advertising, posters and design are now within the purview of galleries as they have long been in that of archives.[8]

With these many blurrings of boundaries, in both directions, the traditional definition of "documentary art" clearly must change. Donors will continue to make their own choices of the institution to hold their collections. And tastes and perceptions will

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[6] The Art Gallery of Ontario and National Gallery of Canada exhibition *Tom Thomson*, curated by Charles C. Hill, Andrew Hunter, Joan Murray and Dennis Reid, which toured Canada in 2002-2003 featured archival photographs, maps and publications. (Exhibition Catalogue published by Douglas and McIntyre, 2002.)
Hindsight: William Hind in the Canadian West, curated by Mary Jo Hughes of the Winnipeg Art Gallery featured Hind's sketchbook. (Exhibition Catalogue published by the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2002).
[7] The exhibition in question is *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist*, and runs at the NGC from Feb. 3 to April 30, 2006.
[8] One example of this is the exhibition *Habitat: Canadian Design Now.* This show, curated by Helen Delacretaz of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, looked at Canadian design and featured waste baskets and furniture sold by Umbra, designed by artists such as Karim Rashid, as well as smaller local companies such as Plastic Buddha Inc. (Exhibition Catalogue by the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2002).

change over time, both as to what is aesthetic and what archives should be documenting. Archives will continue to preserve works that galleries have little interest in, as in the past with such "quality" artists as Krieghoff, Hamilton, Rindisbacher, and others that otherwise would have been lost. Boundaries will continue to blur in future as our understanding of the dimensions and values of visual culture changes, and our own perceptions change of what is historically important and worth documenting and what is aesthetic and representative of the best of human artistic creativity. Yet the two distinctions remain, when all is said and done and all the blurring of boundaries acknowledged: galleries will continue to collect art whose content is aesthetically pleasing by the changing standards and tastes of the present time and archives will continue to acquire art understood in broader context to illuminate some facet of Canadian history, the perception of which is also continually changing. Given the nature of Canada's early artistic development, especially the strong notions of documenting the Canadian landscape, as discussed in Chapter Two, it is evident that a porous boundary that has often become quite subjective will still remain when focusing on historical art. It is also true that a "documentary" work can also reflect "aesthetic" properties and *vice versa*, but this does not negate the general emphases of the two types of institutions. Acknowledging, as a start, that archival art is "collected" for its evidential qualities,[9] there remains the need for much more nuanced and regularly updated appraisal and acquisition strategies, more research in past practice and present artistic developments, fuller enriched contextual descriptions and more gallery-archives cooperation. While defining the nature of a medium that is to be collected, such as art, may be a most

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[9] Sylvia A. Antoniou et al., *The Painted Past*. Public Archives of Canada, exhibition catalogue. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1984, p. 1.

difficult task, it is also one of the most important. What is to be collected, as well as why, is fundamental to the understanding of the nature of the resulting records in archives.

Appendix A: Sample Interview Consent Form

(Please Note: Interviewees signed copies of this consent form printed on University of Manitoba Department of History Letterhead)

Interview Consent

By signing this form, I agree to be interviewed by Rachelle Ross for the purpose of research for her thesis on Documentary Art in Canadian Archives for the Masters in Archival Studies Program at the University of Manitoba.

In answering her questions pertaining to ideas and definitions about Documentary Art, as well as questions about institutional policies regarding the collection, description and general use of this archival media,
I hereby consent to my answers being used as follows:

_____may be quoted directly and linked to my name and position, OR

_____may be paraphrased only and linked to my name and position, OR

_____may only be used for general background information, and my identity may not be revealed beyond listing in the bibliography.

Participant Signature: ________________________________

Print Name:__________________________________

Date: __________________________________

Should you have any questions, you are welcome to contact Rachelle Ross' thesis supervisor, Dr. Terry Cook, Archival Studies Program, Department of History, University of Manitoba, at XXXXXXXXXX

Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions they may prefer to omit.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board University of Manitoba. Should you have any complaints about the project you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Archives:

1. Does your the institution have a formal, or even informal definition of documentary art? If so, what is it?

2. What is your own personal definition of the nature of documentary art?

3. In the Canadian Total archives context, what is the role of this type of record? Is documentary art integrated with some or all other media, and if so how?

4. Are works of art actively collected, ie, artworks are sought out and purchased or donors are contacted instead of waiting passively for donations?

5. What is the current policy regarding what types of artworks are collected?

6. Has this policy changed over time?

7. If yes, in what ways has the policy changed during your career? Across the history of the institution?

8. Would you say that there are particular media that lend themselves to having more documentary qualities?

9. Looking broadly at the institutions collection, are there any works, or media that you would not consider to have documentary qualities?

10. What types of research do you see being done with these records?

11. What types of users of the documentary art collection would you say are predominant and why?

12. In times of budget constraints, would you say this type of record is still considered of primary importance, or is it relegated to the sidelines?

13. How is this work made available to the public beyond those who actually visit the archival institution?

14. How is the work generally presented in finding aids – is it separated by media, put in context of fonds, or series with other types of records?

15. What type of contextual information surrounds the piece above the item level?

16. What type of relationship does the archives have with art galleries within its jurisdiction or geographical area?

17. What types of conflicts have occurred, especially in acquisition, but in other areas as well, between the two institutions over particular works, collections, artists or institutional policies and programs?

18. Has the definition of what art and which artists are suitable for acquisition by archives versus what is acquired by galleries changed over time? Can you give examples from your own collection, and more generally?

Gallery

1. Are you familiar with the term "Documentary Art" as used by archives and archivists to describe works of art that they collect?

2. What would be your definition of documentary art?

3. What is your institutions collecting mandate? Does it include so called "documentary art"

4. Have you ever used documentary art in archives for personal research?

5. Is documentary art, or art in archival collections used regularly for research and or exhibitions at this institution?

6. Is there any works in your collection you would consider documentary or archival?

7. Are there any works that you are aware of in archival collections that you think would be more suited to a gallery setting?

8. What type of working relationship does the gallery have with the archives within its jurisdiction or geographical area? Are you mutually aware of the basics of each others collection? Does lending take place between gallery and archival institutions? Could collection rationalization take place, where works more suitable to one institution's mandate and audience are transferred there?

9. What types of conflicts have occurred, especially in acquisition, but in other areas as well, between two kinds of institutions over particular works, collections, artists or institutional policies and programs?

10. Has the definition of what art (and artists) are suitable for acquisition by archives versus that acquired by galleried changed over time? Can you give examples from your own collection, and more generally?

11. Do you believe that archival institutions should collect works of art? If so which genres, medias or styles?

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